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**DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE
JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY ● CALCUTTA**

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Editor

Swapan Majumdar

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Barbara Godard teaches Literature in York University, Canada; she had been a visiting Fellow the Department. Sisir Kumar Das, the doyen of Comparative Indian Literature, is well-known to the readers of JJCL. Meenakshi Sharma's article deals with a problem embedded in Indian Literature Comparatistics. Bikash Chakraborty, Professor in English and Sitansu Roy, Professor in Music, both from Visva-Bharati, have contributed to the Tagorean understanding of modernity in different areas of thought.

The interview with Utpal Datta, one of the outstanding actor-directors of the Bengali theatre, was recorded on 09 January 1972. The Jadavpur CL team included Amiya Dev, Swapan Majumdar, Suddhasil Basu and Aditi Sen. The tape deciphered by Aditi, then a student, has been used as the source for the present text.

SWAPAN MAJUMDAR

WRITING BETWEEN CULTURES

Barbara Godard

"learning all these words by heart, as well as memorizing all the verb-forms was like having stones rolling around in my head. The whole thing seemed to be humanly impossible."

Marie de l' Incarnation, *Relations* 1654, 137.

White Girl : "School's a strange place....Your throat gets sore....You cough a lot too. I used even to cough blood. And they won't let you talk. They try to make you talk like they do. It's like stones in your mouth."

Daniel David Moses, *Almighty Voice and his wife*, 19-20.

"A nation is not defeated until the hearts of its women are on the ground."

Cheyenne proverb, epigraph to *Almighty Voice and his wife*.

These epigraphs, from the texts to be analyzed, highlight the toil and spoil of translation. Through them, I want to examine the systematic interferences between languages in Canada at two different moments in the wake of imperialism. During the period of first contact between Europeans and Amerindians, as exemplified in the seventeenth century writings of Mère Marie de l' Incarnation, Canadian concepts are translated vertically into European vernaculars and produced as Europe's other in a systematic erasure of horizontal translation among Amerindian languages. Turning in the second instance to the contemporary period, I shall examine the theatre of cultures of First Nations playwright Daniel David Moses who restages the trope of translation to expose therein the rhetorical violence of imperialism. Whereas in the first moment, the bilingual Amerindian translating is figured as potential traitor, as lying thieving Indian, in the second, such duplicity is the power of the trickster, a culture hero.

I am, in fact, more concerned with non-translation than with translation proper, that is with a refusal to translate that produces different political effects in the two texts. The selection of language in a

multilingualistic milieu is always a politically charged process of constituting what Gramsci calls a "normative grammar." "An act of cultural-national policy," such choices enact relations of ruling as they contribute to "the formation and enlargement of the ruling class" and establish relations "between the ruling groups and the national-popular mass" and so organize the "cultural hegemony" (146-47). It is this performativity of translation I wish to analyze through an examination of some of the tropes of translation which constitute the conditions of possibility, the field of the sayable, ordering the movement between languages and cultures wherein the Canadian literature system is produced.

To consider translation within the geopolitical contingencies invoked by the signifier Canada is to engage in a convoluted and ramifying project. For the question of Canadian identity has long preoccupied writers and critics in Canada as well as politicians contemplating the persistent Quebec crisis. Official bilingualism, a polyphony of languages spoken within many diasporas, a settler colony where these many languages have been forced into contact with the diverse languages of the indigenous peoples under European imperialism, all call into question the concept of national language as frame for literary studies. Translation negotiates relations between languages coming to inhabit the very space of language itself. Language change as counter-hegemony develops through struggle with other models and historical phases working as forces of resistance to normative grammar. The "national language," as Gramsci notes, "cannot be anything but 'comparative' ", cannot be imagined "outside the framework of other languages" (146). A country in translation necessitates a consideration of literature not in terms of identity but of relationality with a consequent attention to asymmetries between languages as these order relations of ruling.

The absence of a single national language, and consequently of a homogeneous literary system, has long been a topos of writing in Canada as negativity.¹ It is, however, less an absence of words, a matter of lack, than of excess, the difficulty of choosing among many words, I would suggest, that is a dilemma for the Canadian in an instance of "national heteroglossia" (Bakhtin, 295). This problem for the literary institution derives from Canada's colonial history. Literature since the Renaissance must be tied to a national territory whose mark of identity

is language. Canadians writing in English or French break this chain of nation, language, literature. "Canadian Literature" is a contradiction in terms : to be acknowledged as good Literature, Canadians must follow the norms of writing in England or the U.S. or France. To be recognized as authentically "Canadian," however, they must break these norms by writing "differently." The contradiction of a "national" literature is further compounded for many writing in Canada, a settler colony, in that they write in a language other than English/French—Ukrainian, Hungarian or Urdu, for example—or by translating a variety of dialects into English/French, as in the case of Caribbean-born writers such as Austin Clarke and Gérard Étienne. As an officially bilingual country, literatures in both French and English are fully institutionalized. As well, there is a body of writing by indigenous peoples which, emerging from the colonial archive where it was first transcribed and mediated by administrators in their textual codes, constitutes a rapidly expanding field of contemporary writing of resistance to these institutionally sanctioned discourses. Canada's policy of official "multiculturalism" encourages immigrants from many countries of Africa, South America, Asia and Europe, to retain their cultures, though generally not their languages which remain unofficial. Writing in these languages in publication and consumption or in critical assessment remains constrained to "lesser diffusion" within the literary institution (Dimic). Indeed, the terms of reference of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism that first framed the issues of cultural and linguistic diversity established a clear hierarchy between "the two founding races" (English and French) and "other ethnic groups" (*Report* I xxi). Multiculturalism, as culture without language(s) and authority, or voices reconcilable in one voice, figures an end of translation in fiction of unanimity. Against this, I want to argue, Canadian literature discourse has developed within contradiction, between cultures, between languages. Contradiction is embedded in linguistic signs in their centrifugal potential or differently oriented accents of diverse speech communities, multiaccentuality which the ruling social formation strives to make uniaccentual.

Figured as a dynamic field of interactive languages, or heteroglossia, the literary polysystem requires consideration not of essences or identities but of asymmetrical relations between languages. Critics. calls for a

hybridized “national” language, “Anglo-Ojibwa” and “Franco-huronne,” in the mode of indigenization of romantic nationalism in the nineteenth century, have given way to the creation of syncretic languages by polyglot writers mingling Chinese with English and Hindi.² Systemic racism in the literary institution produced by a focus on the official languages with their implicit “Anglo-European ethnocentricity” (Miki 7) is presently being challenged by writers of the “invisible” “visible minorities” on the grounds of access to the economic resources for such linguistic/cultural production. The 1994 Vancouver conference “Writing Thru Race” spoke forcibly to these concerns by passing a series of resolutions designed to create more public spaces for and to ensure equal access to government grants for writers of colour and those working in non-official languages. As the conference coordinator Roy Miki summed up its impact : “Canadian Cultural values are undergoing radical transformations.” A number of moves are underway in “a larger project of writing ‘thru’ racism—towards a future when First Nations writers and writers of colour can enjoy equity and justice in all the emerging cultural spaces of this country” (Miki 8). To inhabit the state of Canada, it must be imagined anew by each of its many discursive communities, refracted in multiple accents and speech genres. Such contacts and interferences among languages, indeed the internal dynamism or dialectical aspect of the Canadian literature polysystem within itself, may be traced through the activity and function of translation. During periods of cultural change, translation is significant in reorienting signs within multivalent accents, extending their vitality and development. In contemporary Canada, as in Renaissance Europe, translation is a mode of expansion or creation of knowledge through a proliferation of versions or horizons of perception. Literature(s) in excess of, rather than in the absence of, a “national” literature, the Canadian literatures call for models of interaction more complex than those of binary alterity.

A CULTURAL TURN

Translation is an art of approach. Approach signals my understanding of translation as trope or turning (*translatio* or *metapherein*), of necessity

incomplete. Translation itself is a fluid activity conceptualized diversely in various "national" languages and in a variety of tropes at different historical moments. If the connotations of metaphorical and hermeneutic activities from these Latin and Greek terms persist in present day understandings of "translation," they are enriched by other connotations. *Translatare* refers to the displacement of people as well as to the physical transportation of objects and to the transfer of legal jurisdiction as well as of ideas: it might also connote being carried away in transport—enraptured—as well as taking possession of something. In practice, the semantic field has been more restricted, foregrounding the activity of transfer of concepts, though it is, I will suggest, given this expanded meaning by Mère Marie de l' Incarnation. "Translation" which emerged in English in Mediaeval and neo-classical texts connoted the circulation of translinguistic meaning conceived as separate from the medium of language in which it was expressed. *Traduction* emerged in sixteenth-century France from the Italian with a different semantic field meaning to lead across, to transform, or to bring before justice. Developing at a moment when translation becomes an object of discourse in rhetorical modes, not in the mode of conceptual learning, the French translator is understood to be transferring texts from one well-demarcated language to another. Translation here implies the adaptation and acclimatization of the foreign in what is a secondary and inferior activity. This contrasts with the English "translation," which means the circulation of signifieds beyond all reference to either the near or the foreign in some ineffable transcendence. So too, it differs from the German *übersetzung*, to set beside, which underlines the intertranslatability of languages, conceptualizing translation as an interactive and reciprocal game between the self and an other. Different conceptualizations of interlinguistic contact might be framed in non-European languages. Among the many meanings for the Hindi term for this activity, "*anuvad*," those of "the word sitting beside you" and "the word in dispute" set up a contradiction between translation as linking similarities and translation as confronting differences. The Anishinaabe term for translation, *aanikohtamowin*, combines a prefix for "link" with a stem for "story," to convey that translation makes a connection by telling a story about a word.³ Explicitly postulating the translation as a created text, this emphasis on

textuality contrasts significantly with English's focus on semantics or French's concern with rhetorical form. Such storying, I would suggest, informs Daniel David Moses's understanding of linguistic and cultural contact. Each language articulates translation activity differently. The articulation, however, effectively frames understandings of the modalities of linguistic and cultural interference, establishing normative modes of contact, delimiting acceptable forms of relations and strategies of textual manipulation, and configuring speech genres. These relations produce certain hierarchies among signifiers, inscribing relations of power which may make the translator's turn a *conversion* or a *reversion*. Although the range of possible versions a translator may make is considerable—a-version, sub-version, per-version, are a few—it is on these two stances in the passage between languages that I shall concentrate to examine two different scenes of translation at two different moments in the history of translation in the Canadas where the languages interacting are positioned within different axes of power; the one a scene of *instruction*, the other a scene of *insurrection*.

Normative English language translation practice of textural equivalence is, I should like to underline, "an interpretive fiction" (Robinson 259) informing a translator's work. Such a goal of sense-for-sense equivalence is, however, only one possible fiction. In the last decade, translation theory has taken a "cultural turn" to emphasize the way language as a sign system works to produce meaning through sets of signifiers : concern is no longer with the stability of content or meaning across languages but with the vectors of dynamic interference in the contact between languages. With the development of polysystems theory (Evenzohar), and the insights of Bakhtin on the heteroglossia as well as the addressivity of language, there has been a realization that languages or sign systems (including literary systems) are neither unified nor transcendent. Languages are chains of potential relations among signifiers saturated with the play of social forces at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment that orders the actualization of their connections. Within the "mixing of languages that goes on around any object," the "writer confronts a multitude of routes, roads and paths that have been laid down in the object by social consciousness" (Bakhtin 278). There is no "singular way" in which the word relates to an object.'

to the speaking subject or to another word in such an "elastic environment": the "directionality" of the utterance in a specific articulation, its "dispersion in an atmosphere filled with alien words, value judgements and accents," in short, the "dialogic interactions" or collisions that deform/transform become the writer's and the critic's concern (Bakhtin 277-79). The translational utterance does not so much establish a "match" between languages as follow a particular trajectory toward the outsideness of another language. "Language is not a neutral medium" easily made "private property," for it is "overpopulated" with the languages of others, languages to which it responds or which it anticipates. "Expropriating it, forcing it to submit to one's own intentions and accents, is a difficult and complicated process" (Bakhtin 294). Languages are always inbricated in relations of superiority or inferiority, asymmetrical relations which are agonistic and stratifying. The word of certain speech communities is "authoritative," and taken for a general norm. There are languages and literatures of major and minor diffusion within global or even 'national' marketplaces. Within such a model of the ideological interrelation of languages, translation, or the rewriting of a text in a different conceptual horizon, is understood as one of a range of processes of "manipulation" within certain vectors. The concept of difference—of contradiction or syncretism—even of the *différend* (incommensurability) and *différance* (indeterminacy)—displace dogmas of fidelity as concepts of translation activity. Translation is no longer understood as a one-way flow from a source text but as a complex multidirectional movement that transforms a text in a decoding and recoding which gives it an/other life. In this living on, translation may enlarge or constrain a text's authority.

As a "political activity" (Bassnett 157), translation traffics in authority and power: the kind of intersemiotic, intercultural activity that is translation, is "a channel opened, often not without a certain reluctance, through which foreign influences can penetrate the native culture, challenge it and even contribute to subverting it" (Lefevere 2). Cultural transfers are at play in the activity of translation. Traditional metaphors of the translator's activity in English and French establish as normative certain axes of power in the field of translation. In the term "capture" used by George Steiner to describe the "appropriative penetration" of the "source" text, for which aggression the translator, then compensates

with a gesture of restitution in the “target” text (quoted in Bassnett 157), is foregrounded the violence of translation. That translation is a gendered expropriation is conveyed in the conventional French metaphor of “*les belles infidèles*,” which frames as the (gendered) infidelity of a wayward wife, the translator’s straying from the “one true.” It is also implicated in racialized hierarchies as in Dryden’s translation of the *Aeneid* which he prefaces with the metaphor: “But Slaves we are; and labour on another Man’s Plantation; we dress the Vine-yard but the Wine is the Owners” (334). The connotation of translation as transportation is literalized here in a scene of appropriation of labour that resonates in the history of European colonization. The link between power, transfer and transportation is reinforced in the same dedication when Dryden offers his work to his patron, Lord Normanby, as a “Criminal” uncertain of his “Jury” but fortunate “to plead before a favourable Judge” (340). Imperialism in these instances is an act of translation as forced displacement which is camouflaged as fruitful sameness through a translator’s compliant subservience to a prior authority.

Given these particular tropes for normative discourses of equivalence and transparency, it is not surprising that challenges to this paradigm have come from feminist and Latin American translators who conceptualize the visibility of the translator, handmaid or slave, as the political activity of rebellious “*non serviam*” to a “pre-ordained Logos” (de Campos 182), a “Womanhandling” (Godard 50) or diabolical “luciferizing” (de Campos) the text in a movement of translation as resistance or depropriation.⁴ These formulate challenges to any “transcultural universal” of beauty (Bassnett 159), legacy of Eurocentrism, in the name of anti-hegemonic or “unruly crossings” between cultures and languages not regulated by an imperial centre. Translations informed by the projects of overturning established power hierarchies, opening up new directionalities, new modes of address, new articulations of desire around questions of difference, expose the “interanimation of languages” as critique (Bakhtin 296) and foreground translation as transformative work. They make visible the operations of choice (spacing, directionality) among languages as ideological framing.

Traditionally, both comparative literature and post-colonial studies have followed the textual practices of cultural imperialism which “tends

to forget its own history, to the point of failing to recognize the role of translation on culture" (Meschonnic 308). It is against this neglect of language within cultural modelling systems in normative models of comparative literature and against a similar politics of non-translation, sustaining the imperialism of English within Commonwealth and post-colonial literary studies⁵, that I will argue in favour of foregrounding translation as a mode of thinking relationality within power vectors of directionality, in cultural and literary contacts. An imperial politics of language in the Canadas, as I shall show in the work of Mère Marie de l'Incarnation, makes claims to *understand* the Savages, refusing to acknowledge its own powerlessness in the necessity for, and the inadequacy of, its cultural translation: the "Savages" are understood as always-already European, superior Europeans, in fact, since they appear more zealous in their submission—easy converts. The extent to which it is mistranslation and that the Amerindians can take up the language of the Europeans without being confined to its limited meanings is what is at stake in the complex performance of "ghost" in Daniel David Moses's play. A focus on meaning rather than on a "phono-semantic series" of signifiers (de Campos 185) follows logic in its move from word to word by established connections that assure "transparency" and "transcendancy" as strategies of colonial discursivity.

This mode of performance across two languages is not just a matter for "synonym, syntax, and local color", but the staging of a speaking subject within a complex notion of language as "rhetoric, logic and silence." For as Gayatri Spivak writes, "Language is not everything," merely a clue to the point of dissolution of the boundaries of the self (180-81). Rhetoric—established protocols or modes of address—in the other language may be disrupting logic in the production of a subject. As she argues, unless one attends to the relations constituting the "conditions and effects of knowing," and so "construct a model of this for the other language, there is no real translation" (Spivak 181). The problem of constituting a model for a different language, especially for a European translator engaging with a non-European language, is great. Failing to attend to how rhetoric works in "the silence between and around words," in the spacing or rhythm that orders the conditions of utterance, especially directionality or addressivity, constitutes a "founding

violence" of non-translation (Spivak 180-1). This is a movement of homogenization, reduction and displacement which, in its image of a single or pure language marking the end of translation, works to reduce all otherness to the terms of the self. Attending to the "disruptive rhetoricity [of figuration]" of the text "to show the limits of its language" and engage with its "dynamic intricacy" will instead make translation a "site for the exchange of languages" rather than for the repetition of ready-made tropes or colonialist discourse (Spivak 184). Such responsibility to the trace of the other is what Antoine Berman characterizes as "l'épreuve de l'étranger," the estranging work of translation, in which a translator goes out into the language of an other and is defamiliarized, transformed in the process. Languages, subjectivities, are relativized in this double movement of mutual interanimation that is translation. Such "dialogism" points to the incompleteness of all languages, to the absence of any homogenizing master language, not to posit the transcendence of the need to translate some theological moment of signification or "pure language" but, on the contrary, to insist on the dynamic interaction and contamination of languages in the continuous *movement* of transformation in the making and unmaking of hierarchies.

There is nonetheless a difference in the effect of such traffic in languages depending on where one is positioned within the axes of power, and on the direction of the transfer—downwards, upwards or horizontally—along the hierarchy, whether one "translates" the self into the perspective of the other or translates the other into the language of the sovereign subject, or mediates on the difficulties of passage. The alienation of the self in power through recognition of oneself as a kind of foreigner in respect to a mastery one may yet attain differs from translation of the less powerful other who is transported into the self-same to be alienated from the self. The colonizing potentials of the latter constitute the "poetics of imperialism" (Cheyfitz 115) wherein the other is transposed into the master code of empire in an act of *con/version*, as I shall term this "turning," within a scene of instruction.

Challenging the conventional hierarchies of "major" and "minor" literatures by granting precedence to the role of the translator or interlocutor over the author in a cannibalistic move, or by exploring the space in-between texts to write in what has been written out—the raced

or gendered conditions of its articulation and transposition, the "middle passage" or transportation between points of contact, the tropes of turning, the activity of cutting---these are translation practices which make visible the *cultural work* of translation, its effects or ethico-politics. These modalities of turning are concerned with horizontal relations between texts and languages as well as vertical relations, ones I shall characterize as *creative re/versions* stages in scenes of negotiation ranging from armed insurrection to staged resurrection. They open up theoretical implications for the insertion of translation into a consideration of post-colonial literary studies, a project which involves an examination of the political implications and the linguistic complexities of any inter (or intra) cultural transfer. Considering culture not as a fixed and preestablished entity, but as a field of interaction symptomatic of relations of domination, through strategies of integration or usurpation, in which culture is "imagined" in the interests of a certain power (Lefevere 30-31), entails new questions. What are the stakes in such imag (in) ings? What alignments are produced by certain strategies of address? These are the kinds of issues raised by focusing on the addressivity of language : they turn the attention of translation studies outward among the confrontations or facilitations of the contact zone between languages. Translation studies converge here with cultural studies in an examination of the internexus of power, knowledge and subjectivity, concerns that animate my analysis of strategies of non-translation in the Canadian literatures at the height of and in the wake of the imperial moment.

Con/version

"At the heart of every imperial fiction...there is a fiction of translation," asserts Eric Cheyfitz (15). In the Canadas, this is a story of a founding violence, a captivity narrative with many variants as French and Amerindians confined each other in forcible immersion. Jean Delisle begins his history of translation in Canada with the sentence: "Interpretation was the first profession practiced in Canada after the arrival of the Europeans" (33; emphasis added). That translation took place between different indigenous languages before their arrival is overlooked. He also

neglects the violence of this professional debut in that the first translators were inducted into this profession by force—aboriginal peoples abducted and transported to Europe.⁶ Contact with North America was produced in translation both literally (in the narratives of contact edited by Hakluyt which promoted settlement of the Americas) and figuratively: the ‘new world’ came into being in a troping, overwritten by the ‘old’ whose perceptions framed its inhabitants under the universalizing figure ‘Indian,’ as a resource for exploitation and an object for conversion. Metaphor or translation—a carrying across as transportation and/or transference—has been the “very motor” of the “perceptual apparatus” of colonization (Cheyfitz 109).

The dream of absolute power of the discoverer/conqueror is founded in an unacknowledged contradiction. The silence of the ‘Indians’ of North America, proliferated in the literature of exploration in the figure of the ‘Indian’ who speaks no language and the ‘Indian’ who speaks ‘our’ language (guides or “native informants”) is, in fact, symptomatic of a different problem: the failure to recognize the figure “Indians speak a language and it is different from ours” (109). ‘We’ do not understand this language and so its speakers appear silent or invisible to ‘us’. This may also occur in its converse: ‘we’ all speak the ‘same’ language and ‘we’ all revere the ‘same’ object whereby ‘we’ come to cohere as subject. In effect, this is a figure of non-translation for what it presents as a problem in *intercultural* communication turns out to be a problem in *intracultural* competence, a problem with metaphor. A contradiction within one language between the “natural” and the “figurative” is projected outward as two incommensurate languages (Cheyfitz 121-2). A failure at dialogue is figured as a genetic inability of the other: the inferiority of aboriginal languages, their ‘barbarity,’ becomes the imperial alibi for (rhetorical) domination. Two metaphorical machines encounter each other but only one is understood as rhetoric or art: the other is perceived as transparent or ‘natural.’ The translation of the ‘inferior’ by the ‘superior’ is simultaneously impossible, because of this qualitative discrepancy understood as intellectual deficiency, and inevitable, because of the same discrepancy understood as power differential (Cheyfitz 122). The Amerindian is thus perceived to speak both gibberish (speaking with stones in her throat) and with a ‘natural’ eloquence in a language taught

him/her by Europeans. Aboriginal oral utterances as varied as oratory and prayer are (re)ordered within European rhetorical forms. Clashes between Amerindians and European power necessitate the production of written texts within European formal conventions as, for example, in the many letters of petition from first Nations peoples to government officials filed in the colonial archives (Petrone). Translation moves here to obliterate difference, to eliminate the need for translation, to bring about its own end. The dilemma after Babel will be overcome when everyone understands 'our' language.

A myth of a 'common' language is central to the imperializing and civilizing project which equates speaking well with being human. Not to do so is to be a 'savage.' To speak well is to master a language, that is, to speak the language of the metropolis. Incoherency is translated into 'coherent' speech which 'makes sense' within what is so constituted as a 'universal' language, a 'colonizing' language. Translation of the 'other' into the codes of the empire entails a mission of conversion, most explicitly one of translation as instruction in the language and culture of the master. The connection of learning a language and mastery in the transfer of culture from one people to another transferred the Roman *imperium*, a model of an empire with Latin as a universal language, to maintain the (imperial) idea of a universal rather than national character.⁷ A version of the mediaeval theory of *translatio imperii et studii*, suggests Eric Cheyfitz, this offered a theory of history as the cyclical replacement of one empire by another that was simultaneously a theory of rhetoric and one of translation. The transmission of learning (*studii*) was co-terminous with a transferral of power. In the Canadian context, the use of Latin figured the cultural transfer of empire as pan-European Renaissance or Catholic return to Apostolic fervour.

The *Translatio* was both a theory of figurative language and a theory of the transmission of power in that it proposed a monologic theory of translation from and into (infraduction and supraduction) the hierarchically 'superior' languages of Europe. At its centre is a 'primal scene' in which an orator by his eloquence 'civilizes' a 'savage.' This "imperial commonplace" is the narrative of the orator as first settler or colonizer, bringing humanity and civility to 'wild savages' or 'wild lands,' found in Cicero's *De Inventione* and *De Oratore*, texts used for centuries in

the teaching of rhetoric or eloquent speaking (Cheyfitz 113-4).⁸ I shall turn to such a scene of instruction in the work of Mère Marie de l'Incarnation, a Canadian example in which Amerindian girls are taught to identify against themselves with the gospel's "poor in spirit" in order to gain greater power through transformation into French-speaking Catholics. This translation of the aboriginals into the terms of empire ironically writes them out of the empire as silent Other, eliminating the specificity of their cultures and languages and of the act of translation itself in the supraduction by conflation of Amerindian languages with Latin, universal language.

First, though, I want to talk about another kind of non-translation that fails to recognize the Amerindians' cultural difference while paradoxically writing that difference out (side). This variant of the failure to acknowledge that aboriginals have cultures and languages which are complete and autonomous, so that horizontal translation between Amerindian languages might figure in the relations of exploration and settlement, or that a dialogic countertransference might occur in the passage between European and aboriginal languages whereby the European would be transformed in the activity of translating, propagates the myth of the "empty continent" which enables the transfer (translation) of 'Indian' land into 'Canadian' property. In this case, within the context of English attempts to settle Newfoundland,⁹ the 'Indians' are not overwhelmed by the eloquence of a European speaker, for there are no 'Indians' visible⁵. They have been written out of the landscape entirely. The 'new world' is figured as incomplete, in need of the completion or settlement of the 'old.' The land is first translated into British property in an imperial project framed in Latin, that universal language of Renaissance humanism, in which the Hungarian scholar, Stephen Parmenius, bard of Sir Gilbert Humphrey's expedition, wrote to his Oxford friend, Richard Hakluyt.¹⁰ Oscillating between documentary inventory, manipulating the figure of analogy to produce the 'effect of the real' and naturalize the 'new world' for civilizing prospects, and prayer for favours from British patrons, Parmenius's letter produces a subject of the enunciation wherein the spoken subject is figured as powerless in comparison to the addressee. The threat of subjection is reduced by mastery of Latin rhetoric, language of eloquence and (self)-

control. In the "absence of any people," "Newfoundland" functions as a screen of vacancy, in a relation between Europeans through which the subject differentiates himself as universal and powerful, filling the void with representations a imitations.¹¹

In the French relations of exploration and settlement greater attention is given to both Amerindian languages and to translation. Jacques Cartier acknowledged the need for interpretation, albeit with a violent capture. To the *Relation* of his voyages are appended glossaries of Iroquoian terms limited, though, to elementary phrases of numbers, food, basic questions. Moreover, Cartier's description of the coasts of the Maritime provinces and of the St. Lawrence River is mediated by not one but two modes of perception, a marking of distinctions as well as a search for equivalences. He notes that the peoples he encountered "appellent ung hachot en leur language cochy et ung cousteau bacan. Nous nomames ladite baye la baye de chaleur" (1545, 1986, 113). This is not an equal traffic in languages as the balanced rhetorical structure of the sentences would convey, but the prelude to a narrative of tricks and captures, where the reported calculation and feints of the Amerindians are met with ambushes and abductions by Cartier. Indeed, the pursuit of similarities dominates: this act of naming in a European language, follows a passage of description under the sign of equivalences ('we' are all Europeans) of the quality of the wheat and rye growing at this site, description positioned between two sentences predicting the ease of converting these Natives.¹² This opinion is formed after initial contact with aboriginals who have readily accepted axes, paternosters and other goods and given away everything they had in exchange until "they had nothing but their naked bodies" (1580, 1975, 18). Such a perception of Amerindian submission to European persuasiveness stands in unmarked opposition to the observation a week later that "Ilz sont larrons à merveilles de tout ce qu'ilz peuvent desrober" (1545, 1986, 116). Who is more credulous, it is difficult to discern. Reading between the lines, this contradiction manifests a cultural clash over concepts of property where a gift economy of hunter-gatherer culture confronts the private ownership of proto-capitalism and neither recognizes the other as a system. Between these two sentences, Amerindians' dancing and speech-making ("harangue" 1545, 1986, 116) are noted uncomprehendingly by the European

chronicler¹³, while the aboriginals' astonishment ("*estonnez*" 1545, 1986, 117) at 'the inside of Cartier's ships is emphasized as a sign of Donnaconna's good will.¹⁴

Relations between French and aboriginals are repeatedly constituted in this mode of misprision, the eye reading similarity, the ear distinguishing difference. The failure to attend to the silent cultural signs ordering modes of address, produces translation as metaphor, translation as violence. The authoritative certainty of the narrator in reporting these gestures as transparent in face of the incomprehensibility and hence untranslatability of the speech is nothing short of the marvellous. The European elides signs of resistance, that is, of difference: invisible, cultural incommensurability is thus transcended.¹¹ Cartier's "sauvages" are "gense" ("people"), potential Europeans, in need of moulding or developing under a firm hand. We read aboriginal oratory as silence through Cartier's narrative rhetoric. What figures in his account is the venerable topos of *traduttore traditore*, the translator as traitor, here confounded with that topos of imperialism, the 'lying thieving Indian,' suffering the pollution of bilingualism, of being between cultures as "crippled two-tongues" (Maracle 109).¹⁵

It is the persuasive "technology of eloquence" (Cheyfitz 34)—rhetorical power enhanced by the representational machinery of writing, a "literall advantage" (Purchase I, 486)—in the service of religious conversion, that figures prominently in the figure of *translatio* in the work of Mère Marie de l'Incarnation. Instruction is as effective a modality of figuring the Amerindians out of power as their elimination from topographical description by Parmenius or their capture by Cartier. The figure of instruction involves a paradox of translation as non-translation, the learning of Amerindian languages in order to bring the aboriginals to a recognition of the universal power of Latin, of Catholicism as transcendent Truth, through the sacred writings of christianity. Against the dangers of the forked tongue that would produce lies and errors in translation on the part of "native informants," is positioned the power of christian ritual and rhetoric to guard against "delusion" (de l'Incarnation 1967, 76).

Containment is critical in Mère Marie de l'Incarnation's figuration of translation, but her's is a chosen captivity, the confinement of the

cloister. This enclosure symbolizes 'civilized' femininity which she seeks to impose on the Amerindian girls sent to be educated in the Ursuline convent at Quebec. Aboriginal women had the freedom of the forest and "canote comme des hommes" (829). More disturbing to the Jesuits was their sexual freedom unregulated by the concept of 'sin' (Anderson 86). Realizing the impossibility of their goal should they not 'civilize' the aboriginal women, the Jesuits brought nuns to New France. Attracted by the enlarged possibilities for her own spiritual and administrative activity in the forests of Quebec where the apostolic authority of cloistered nuns received full recognition—indeed, the pioneer nuns were called "Amazones due Grand Dieu"—Marie de l'Incarnation nonetheless sought to circumscribe her aboriginal pupils within the rules of discipline and surveillance of the cloister, instructing them through the catholic rite of examination of consciousness in practices of psychological control to separate them from the negative (barbarous) influences of the forest. This is characteristic of the split subjectivity produced in feminist discourses with their contradictory values of enlightenment emancipation or autonomy and of feminine difference as passivity and dependence. Marie's scrupulous exactitude in following the rule of the cloister, despite its ultimate hampering of her avowed vocation to win souls, places her discourse more heavily on the scales of feminine submission.

Her *Correspondance* oscillates between these contradictory pulls of assertion and subjection, punctuating her portraits of aboriginal women, some noted for their heroic exploits in freeing themselves from Iroquois captivity and making their way back to Montreal or Quebec on their own (329), others praised for their docility and submission to the nuns (72). So, too, Marie de l'Incarnation destabilizes her own authority as knowing subject, minimizing her skill in learning Algonkian, Montagnais, Huron and Iroquois languages by attributing it all to divine inspiration¹⁶. Learning them, she wrote was "humanly impossible." So, she continues: "I spoke lovingly to our Lord about it, and he came to my aid to such a degree that in a short time I had a very great facility in the language so that the activity of my interior life was neither hindered nor interrupted" (127). By effacing herself to become God's instrument, she will make possible the perfect translation of the Word. Meaning transcends the material modalities of communication : apparent disparities

are absorbed into a vaster unity. Her letters are mediated by these two modes of perception, a marking of differences, of error and delusion, that transforms itself into a web of equivalences, of truth and illumination. The fall into the wilderness, into languages, serves as testimony to a providential mission to New France and as evidence of the particular grace bestowed on her as the devoted handmaiden of the Lord. This is, moreover, a particularly skillful rhetorical device for soliciting help for the project of New France.

The power of providence manifests itself in rhetorical eloquence, as Mère Marie de l'Incarnation records it: "Le R. Père le Jenue qui est le principal ouvrier qui a cultivé cette vigne, continue à y faire des merveilles. Il Prêche le peuple tous les jours et lui fait faire tout ce qu'il veut: Car il est connu de toutes ces nations, et il passe en leur esprit pour un homme *miraculeux*" (1971, 94; emphasis added). The transformative results of his preaching are evident in their effects, as Mère Marie observes upon her arrival in New France in September 1639: the christian God is "praised in four different tongues [Montagnais, Algonquin, Huron, French]" by aboriginal preachers which she reads as prophecy of her future, teaching girls of this "barbarous country" the way to heaven (1967, 69).¹⁴ Certainly, this promise of the easy conversion of the aboriginals makes Mère Marie forget the perils of the ocean crossing where they had almost capsized, catastrophe forestalled by divine intervention. Commencing her voluminous *Correspondance* with these providential signs, Mère Marie establishes the rhetorical form of her relation, a litany of examples of God's benevolence. An insuperable difficulty is introduced as prelude to a demonstration of divine power, the lesson of the *felix culpa* or happy fall. This scene represents the universality of Catholicism, for the diversity of languages masks a singularity of meaning: "Nous sommes tous ici pour un même dessein" (1971, 88). Christian eloquence holds out the promise of a single, pure language, a miraculous speaking in tongues where there is mutual comprehension and unanimity of belief—a common desire—that transcends and redeems the fall into Babel. Translation undertaken in the ethnocentric aim of conversion produces a vision of salvation—for Mère Marie at least.

This goal of sense-for-sense equivalence is based on a theory of textual transfer grounded in the onto-theological discourse of the one

True "Word" and its many distortions, formulated in classical metaphysics and Biblical hermeneutics, and regulating the translation practice of the early church fathers working on the Vulgate (Robinson 55). The theory postulates a hierarchized dualism with everyone— except God and his Logos or 'true meaning' at the top—an instrument of the level above and an instrumentalizer of the level below. Through divine inspiration, the Biblical translator will become invisible, an instrument of God, and make possible the perfect translation of 'Meaning', perfection being measured in the extent to which a translation supersedes the original. Such 'originality' is achievable only through slavish imitation which valorizes divine authorship and erases all traces of textual mediation. Applied to non-Biblical texts, this theory refuses to acknowledge conflictual relations between cultures and texts, assuming that translation occurs only between "identically-placed system" (Bassnett 146).

Christian eloquence thus contains the threat of translation, the duplicity and lying of those who speak many languages and distort the one true Word with their accents. Skill in the French language, as well as knowledge of the Catholic catechism, limit the threat of bordercrossing with its attendant risks of impurity by imposing a rigid hierarchy. Not only does this make the aboriginal pupils tractable but it enables the nuns to carry out their surveillance more effectively, as in Mère Marie's account of Marie Amiskouevan, a model of docile devotion, whose bilingualism is testimony to the persuasiveness of the French missionaries. "Il ne se peut rien voir de plus souple ni de plus innocent; ni encore de plus candide, *car nous ne l'avons surprise une seule fois dans le mensonge*, qui est une grande vertu dans les Sauvages... Cette fille *nous a beaucoup aidé dans l'étude de la langue, parce qu'elle parle bien François*. Enfin cette fille gagne les cœurs de tout le monde par sa grande douceur et par ces belles qualitez" (1971, 95, emphasis added). Submissiveness is the significant quality for verifying the reliability of her translation for it is a sign of her perfect mastery of the cultural rhetoric of European translation practices. Taking up the role of subservient handmaid positions her within her 'proper' role in the instrumental hierarchy, assuring the fidelity and transcendence of target language version in a movement of supraduction for the circulation of Meaning beyond all language. Marie's fidelity is corroborated in *Les*

Relations des Jésuites where following her marriage it is reported, “she gave proofs of a faith strong and animated by love,” repelling the advances of several young pagans who were courting her, and reacting strongly to the ministrations of a traditional Shaman (“longleurs” xx, 128-9) to her sick brother. These proofs are gestures, tears and smiles—more secular than sacred signs—interpreted as rejection of aboriginal religious practices by the priest who presupposes cultural universals.¹⁸

This woman enters into the colonial archive with proper names (Marie-Magdeleine)¹⁶ through her skill in languages, her aptness as a pupil. It is her knowledge of French which makes her so valued since she can act as go-between, both carrying the word of Christ to her kin and helping the nuns perfect their skills in the Algonkian language. In returning her to her people with new powers of reading, writing, and telling the gospel, the missionaries were making use of, and recuperating for their own ends, the aboriginal practice of according women authority to speak in public assemblies. Indeed, it was the resistance of aboriginal women to their teaching, and the consequent difficulty in converting the tribes, that had induced the Jesuits to bring the Ursulines to New France (de l’Incarnation 117-8). By educating the women, it was hoped, the entire tribe would be saved from such ‘diabolic’ temptation, Christianized and Francisized. Particularly important in this regard were the dual constraints of silencing women as social actors while encouraging them to reveal their most private thoughts in confession and receive instruction in how to understand them, so learning obedience and humility. Returning the girls with official presents, charged as ambassadors to their people, reinforced the new hierarchy being established of “Jesuits-Ursulines-aboriginal child-adult aboriginal” (Deslandres 106).

Marie differs from the other Algonkians precisely in her refusal to lie, lie avoided by speaking transparently that is, (as) French. Her lifestory, however, unfolds along the same lines as those of other girls inserted into these relations— sudden and total transformation upon baptism.¹⁹ “Progress” is equated with a sedentary life, with confinement within the domestic space of ‘civilized’ femininity. In her early letters, Mère Marie expresses surprise at the way the aboriginal girls accept the confines of the cloister. Though Marie Negabmat kept running away into the woods at first, after her Christianized father ordered her to return,

she was transformed within two days into a model of piety.²⁰ At this point, Mère Marie stresses the success of the missionaries in establishing the power of the cloister. Nearly thirty years later, she admits to her son that only one out of every hundred girls who have come to them has been "civilized." When least expected, the girls climb over the palisade "like squirrels" (1971, 802) and disappear into the forest with their parents. Being cooped up in houses makes them melancholy and ill.¹⁹ Despite these failures in her vocation, Mère Marie continues to uphold the importance of enclosure with the gendered and class hierarchy it constitutes, rather than to abandon the cloister to follow the aboriginals' itinerant life in the forest.

This gap between exemplum and actuality may also be a function of Mère Marie's eagerness to detect cultural similarity in visual signs.²¹ Mimicry of gestures is how she measures the quality of Marie Negabmat's transformation: "elle tressallit de joye à la veue d [u] pourtraict" of the Virgin Mary and prays twice, first in Algonkian with her friends, then with the French girls (1971, 91). Agnes Chabwekwechich is considered exemplary for repeating the Christmas sermon to the children in the convent complete with gestures (*Relations*, XX, 134-35). What the aboriginal girls' readings of these gestural codes might be is elided in this text which focuses exclusively on the correct repetition of ritual forms. Were they manipulating the codes to their own profit, as the sons of Donnaconna had? (Cartier 1986, 143, 145) What is the twentieth century reader to make of Mère Marie's accounts of how the girls showered the nuns with caresses as they never did their own mothers²¹ indeed had come to think of the nuns as "truly our mothers, we lack nothing with them"? (*Relations* XX, 138-39) Did they recognize their position as hostages and attempt to make the best of it? Was this duplicitous mimesis, playing up to the nuns in response to the latter's fantasmatic investment in transformation only to get new clothes and attention showered upon them? These, however, were not sufficient incentive for Nicole Assepanse to leave her mother (de l'Incarnation 1971, 96). Mère Marie records these contradictions without comment, demonstrating fantasmatic certainty in the cultural universality of gestural signs which she reads within her own narrative model of conversion as 'true (Christian) belief.'

So much has Marie Amiskouevan become the 'civilized barbarian' that she has a French suitor and is on the point of assimilation. But the nuns appropriate her cultural fluency, her zeal in their service, for their ends and arrange her marriage to an 'aboriginal man, a student in the seminary. Moreover, they use her in the traffic in languages within their missionary aims of total conversion to translate French Catholicism downward. In the exchange of letters between New France and France, she figures in the textualization of this 'civilizing' project: this anecdote of her conversion written in French serves as exemplum in the Ursulines' continual petitions for funds.²² The plea for help for the future is underwritten by the description of the always-already francisized aboriginal. Marie and other aboriginal girls figure as objects of demonstration for the miraculous transformative powers of christian rhetoric and the perfect submission of the Ursulines to his will as instruments in this conversion. Encounters between native informants' and missionaries' master discourse involving questions of translation are reconstructed in a textual account that brings reader and native into a textual participation fusing external and indigenous cultural descriptions. Mère Marie's discourse oscillates between exemplum and prayer, constituting a subject of enunciation in the authoritative reportage of Amerindian life, abjecting herself in submission to the wealthy patron and the divine author.²³

The potential betrayal of translation of Amerindian languages is contained in a troping that makes them 'sacred' and affirms divine authorship. The French nuns and priests do not leave interpretation exclusively to the aboriginal peoples but learn their languages themselves in order to speak more eloquently, to persuade more effectively. They write glossaries and grammars to fix knowledge so they will not be dependent on treacherous aboriginals or nativized French *coureur do bois* as interpreters (Delisle 35). Mère Marie begins a letter to a fellow religious a year after her arrival in Quebec with a salutation in Algonkian which she immediately translates into French. These, she concludes the paragraph, are "à peu près ce que nous disons ordinairement à nos chères Néophytes" (1971, 108). The figure of linguistic difference with which the letter begins slides into one of commonality. Translating upward and downward, into and from the French, is synonymous for Mère Marie, for the rhetoric of the utterances is the same, to transport or, more

precisely, to transfer (French) Catholicism, to encounter the sublime as an instrument of divine providence. In this trope, she rewrites Canada into the Roman empire.

Travels outward to the new world are figured as travels back in time : New France is fused with Biblical time and place. Indeed, contrary to others perceptions that Canada is located in the regions of hell, she finds it perfect Paradise (112). She has been transported to the time of Christ under the Romans, to the period of early Apostolic fervour conflated with the later inspired work of the Church Fathers translating the Vulgate, and represents skill in the Algonkian languages as knowledge of the sacred and universal language, Latin. As she writes : "Nous faisons nos études en cette langue barbare comme font ces jeunes enfans, qui vont au Collège pour apprendre le Latin. Nos Révérends Pères quoique grands docteurs en viennent là aussi-bien que nous, et ils le font avec une affection et docilité incroyable" (108). This trope of inversion as infantilization is repeated in the many allusions to the blessedness of spirit among those who are to all appearances poor and naked in the new world. Study is difficult and humbling, but is made easier by "God's Grace".²⁴ Learning to speak well (selflessly), putting on the drapery of rhetoric as in the figure of *translatio*, will lead ultimately to the authority of the spirit to persuade so that New France will become God's kingdom regained. It was also a potential site for martyrdom, a possibility Mère Marie, like the Jesuits, had constantly in mind (1971,94). All her hardships and deprivations were read as signs of possible ravishment of a different order, framed by the excess of the counter-Reformation which translated extreme material suffering or sacrifice into the ineffable language of the mystical sublime. Barbarity is thus configured as sanctity. Translating downward into aboriginal languages is refigured as vertical translation into Latin, language of the ineffable. Even the forked-tongue translator may be converted when Latin becomes the universal truth of the colonial encounter with spatial and temporal coordinates confounded in the process. This universal language is possible only by separating language and cultures so that Eurocentric ideas are exchanged in any and all languages. In such a process of displacement, the aboriginal languages are surplus signs taken as waste, infinitely replaceable and expendable.

These texts subsequently entered the European literary system in the guise of non-fiction as the 'truth' of 'discovery,' producing innovation within it, at a moment when Europe was inventing itself in spatial relation to the Americas, Africa and Asia, as well as in temporal relation to the Greeks and Romans. To locate in the texts of exploration and settlement the specificity of aboriginal perspectives in the colonial encounter requires a shift in the object of investigation to the colonized in the production of decolonized knowledge. Reconfiguring the subject-position of indigenous peoples as colonized, however, does not undo the ideological work of their exclusion as subjects to and of their own historical making. At the centre of this exclusion is the politics of translation implicit in such colonial texts as the letters of Mère Marie de l'Incarnation where the translator refuses to engage with the rhetoricity of the source text of Marie Amiskouévan, to consider where its social logic ordering the relations between words may work according to a different economy. Gestures are read with infallible certainty: the potentially disruptive logic of the Algonkian languages is erased in the trope that turns them into Latin, the language of imperial truth.

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NOTES

1. The lack of "haunting ghosts" lamented by Earle Birney in "Can. Lit." functions, paradoxically, as an identificatory fiction for Robert Kroetsch: "The interest in the question of identity speaks its presence in a curious way. That presence announces itself as a absence" (41). Canadian writing manifests "resistance to a speakable name" (41).

2. For more detailed analysis of these two modes of translation practice see my essays, "The Oral Tradition and National Literatures" and "The Discourse of the Other : Canadian Literature and the Question of Ethnicity."

3. There are some eleven dialects in Anishinaabemowin. This term for translation was given by a speaker of the Severn dialect. A nineteenth-century dictionary gives "ahnekuhnóotuhbeega" for "translate" and "ahnekuhnóotahga" for "interpret." The suffix "beega" means writing. "Story" is transcribed as "enáhjemowin" (Wilson). A twentieth-century lexicon, drawing heavily on the Odawa dialect of Wikwemikong renders "interpret" as "aanikkanootamaake" which combines the suffix "aanikko" (to join or tie together) with a suffix "akke" (to work with or make). The name for the language is "anishinaabemowin" while story or narrative is written "tipaacimowin" (Piggott and Grafstein). Within this range of variants, the emphasis is on the active manipulation or work of bringing two languages into contact.

4. "The Brazilian and the Canadian groups of translation theorists have in common the aim of celebrating the role of the translator, of making the translator visible in an act of transgression that seeks to reconstruct the old patriarchal/European hierarchies" (Bassnett 157).

5. The neglect of language is more an issue in post-colonial than in comparative literature studies though recent attention to the displacement of English by "englishes" ("Language becomes a medium through which an hierarchical structure of power is perpetrated and the medium through which

conceptions of 'truth,' 'order,' and 'reality' become established.' Ashcroft et al 9) introduces the topic without, however, addressing the proliferation of languages other than "english" in former British settler colonies and the continuing vitality of indigenous languages in former colonies of invasion, not to speak of the interlanguages their encounters with English have spawned, such as Chiac and Joul, two examples of the blending of French and English in Canada, as well as Michif Cree, a combination of Cree and French and Chinook, of western indigenous languages with English.

6. Taignoagny and Domagaga, sons of Donnaconna, chief of Quebec, were kidnapped by Cartier on his first voyage in 1534 and returned to Quebec in 1535 when he kidnapped their father. Cartier, himself an interpreter of Portuguese in the port of St. Malo, taught French to the aboriginals, learning only a few words of their language himself. His lexicon was completed with the help of Donnaconna. On his third voyage, he planned to send young men to live with aboriginals, but the immersion project ended after two days when the aboriginals conspired against the French. Captivity figures importantly in the apprenticeship of translators in the exploration phases of the colony. In the seventeenth century, Champlain sent young men to live with the Hurons, Algonquins and even the enemy Iroquois. They were subject to torture and other trials: when they withstood, proving their strength and courage, they were adopted into the tribes, as was the case with such celebrated "*truchements*" as Etienne Brulé, Guillaume Couture, Jean-Paul and Thomas Godefroy. Their knowledge of indigenous languages enabled them to profit from the fur trade. For this, they needed to become "masters of eloquence and persuasion," Delisle notes (29), because the English trading centres were closer than the French. The aboriginals had respect for the "esprit" of those who spoke their language, considering those who did not as less than human. This produced competition with the missionaries: the "*coureur de bois*" were reluctant to share their linguistic knowledge with the priests. There were also political differences: they became 'indianized' while the priests sought to Frenchify the Natives. Consequently, the priests began to make dictionaries so as to teach each other. For more analysis of these early interpreters see Jean Delisle, "Les interprètes sous le régime français". For an Amerindian perspective on multilingualism see Métis historian Olive Dickason (79).

7. This was explicit in the development of the Carolingian Empire when Alcuin followed the details of the opening scene of *De Inventione* in a letter to Charlemagne in response to requests for the rules of rhetoric so that the emperor might rule properly (Cheyfitz 112-3).

8. This topos still informs such nineteenth-century Quebec Texts as the celebrated *roman du terroir*, *Jean Rivard*, where oratory and improvement of soil and *habitans* are the making of a hero as political ruler.

9. On June 24 1997, Newfoundland celebrated the 500th anniversary of the landing of John Cabot (Giovanni Caboto) to claim the land for England.

10. This policy is different from that of the French who took Beothuks back to France to train them as interpreters before 1508 (Delisle 6). In the late sixteenth century, a French sailor observed that the Amerindians in the Straits of Belle-Isle, traded in French, English, Gascony and Basque (Delisle 23-24).

11. Parmenius was among those who died on that fatal expedition of 1583, but an epic poem he wrote of the settlement project and his letter to Hakluyt, both in Latin, survive as the first texts written in (British) North America. The letter, translated by Hakluyt, was published in his compilation of "explorer's" relations (*Principall Navigations* 1589) of which it is, despite its brevity, rhetorically exemplary.

12. Parmenius's text also sets in play the problem of translation within Renaissance Europe in the desacralization of languages and the emergence of vernaculars as state languages and, consequently, of national(ist) discourses. Becoming national is paradoxically for a language to become colonial and colonizing; colonial in differentiating itself from the universal language Latin, colonizing in representing itself mimetically as universal. Parmenius's letter appears in print in the English translation of Hakluyt, ardent promoter of England's colonizing projects. In his translation, Hakluyt amended his dead friend's text to remove lines where Parmenius had reported negatively on the coldness of the climate because of icebergs in May. Such textual manipulation in translation is in keeping with Hakluyt's literal use of *translation* in the strong sense of *transfere* and *metaphere*, to transport or carry something from one place to another, in a passage that is potentially enrapturing, "captivating" its reader.

13. "Nous congneumes que se sont *gens* qui seroient fassilles à convertir...Je estime mielx que aultrement que les gense seroient faciles à convertier à notre sainte foy" (1545, 1986, 113, emphasis added), quoted approvingly by Hakluyt in *Discourse of Western Planting* (4).

14. A frequent comment in Cartier's Relations is "Par default de langue ne pensames avoyr congnoissance."

15. This rapture is read by the French as a sign that Donnaconna—wearing his bearskin, "haranging," and *seeming* ("comme s'il eust voullu dire que toute la terre estoit à luy" 1545, 1986, 116) to protest the planting of a cross in the name of the King of France—"qu'ilz ne habbatroyent ladite crois en nous faisant *plusieurs harengues que n'entendions*" (1545, 1986, 117, emphasis added). Florio's translation—"woulde not remove the Cross we had set up" (1580, 1975, 23)—leaves out the last phrase which records French inability to understand indigenous spoken languages, seemingly a matter less significant to the English.

16. The Natives excel in the double play of illusion, staging a performance of sorcery in which they imitate Christian rhetoric and ritual in the name of "Cudouagny" to warn Cartier against travelling to Hochelaga. Cartier considers the refusal of Taignoagny and his brother to accompany him up river, as they had purportedly promised in France, to be "treason" and "trickery" ("Lors aperseumes que ledit Taignoagny ne valloit rien et qu'il ne songeoit que *trahison* tant pour ce que pour aultres tours que luy avyons veu faire" 1986, 143), but the miming of Christian ritual is related neutrally, without comment on its evident parody ("Et commança ledit Taignoagny à dire et proferer par troys fois 'Jesus Jesus Jesus' levant les yeulx vers le ciel et puy Domagaya commança à dire 'Jesus Maria Jacques Cartier' regardant le ciel comme l'autre" (1986, 145). How could Hakluyt, reading of this passage have interpreted the aboriginals as "easily converted"?

17. Significantly, French interpreters or "*coureur de bois*" received similar nicknames: Jean Nicolet was known as Achurra ("*homme deux fois*") for his linguistic skills while François Marguerie went by the name "*homme double*" (Delisle 52, 61). This ready acceptance by the aboriginals earned them suspicion from the priests. When Etienne Brulé and Nicolas Marsolet helped the English occupiers of Quebec in 1629, they were considered traitors by the civil authorities as well (Delisle 39).

18. She compiled an Iroquois dictionary, a French-Algonkian dictionary, and Algonkian-French dictionary and a catechism in Huron, all of which have been lost making analysis of her translation practice impossible.

19. "Car entendre louer la Majesté en quatre langues différentes : voir baptiser quantité de Sauvages : entendre les Sauvages mêmes prêcher la loy de Jésus-Christ à leurs compatriotes, et leur apprendre à bénir et à aimer notre Dieu : les voir rendre grâces au ciel de nous voir envoyées dans leur païs barbare pour instruire leurs filles, et leur apprendre le chemin du ciel: tout cela, dis-je, n'est-il pas capable de nous faire oublier nos croix et nos fatigues, fussent-elles mille fois plus grandes quelles n'ont été?" (1971, 88).

20. She is known as "Magdeleine de Saint Joseph Amiskweian" (XX 126-7). "When she saw certain Jugglers breathe upon her sick brother, and sing to him, she only wept; as soon as these Charlatans had been driven away, the poor child began to laugh, indicating by her tears the horror that she had for their ancient superstitions, and showing by her joy the pleasure she took in seeing her brother inclined to have recourse to God" (XX 128-9).

21. That this is her full name is suggested in the notes of Dom Guy Oury to his edition of the *Correspondence* (124). The hyphenated name ironically invokes both that of the Virgin Mary, immaculate, and of Magdelene, the Sinner, and so combines the double tropes of conversion in Mère Marie's discourse,

that of ease of conversion, because always-already European and 'naturally good,' and that of potential infidelity in need of a strong shaping hand.

22. "Elles perdent tout ce qu'elles ont de sauvage si tôt qu'elles sont lavées des eaux due saint baptême en sorte que ceux qui les ont veues auparavant courir dans les bois comme des bïetes sont ravis et pleurent de joye de les voir douces comme des brebis s'approcher de la sainte table pour y recevoir le véritable agneau" (1971, 112).

23. "Elle n'y fut pas deux jours qu'il y eu un changement admirable. Elle ne sembloit plus être elle-même, tant elle étoit portée à la prière et aux pratiques de la piété Chrétienne, en sourte qu'aujourd'huy elle est l'exemple des filles de Québec" (de l' Incarnation 1971, 95). *Les Relations des Jésuites* records the same transformation, but portrays baptism as an act of violence when Père Le Jeune threw Marie into the river for not obeying her parents (XX, 132-2) Aboriginal peoples did not punish their children, to Père Le Jeune's great disapproval: he favoured a family structure of paternal authority (Anderson).

24. "C'est pourtant une chose très difficile, pour ne pas dire impossible de les franciser ou civiliser. Nous en avons ; l'expérience plus que tout autre, et nous avons remarqué de cent de celles qui ont passé par nos mains à peine en avons nous civilisé une. Nous y trouvons de la docilité et de l'esprit, mais lors qu'on y pense le moins elles montent par dessus notre clôture et s'en vont courir dans les bois avec leurs parens, où elles trouvent plus de plaisir que dans tous les agréments de nos maisons Françoises. L'humeur Sauvage est faite de la sorte: elles ne peuvent être contraintes, si elles le sont, elles deviennent mélancholiques, et la mélancholie les fait malades. (809)

25. Significantly, the Ursulines did much of their teaching of Catholic doctrine to aboriginal students with the help of images illustrating Biblical narratives and the catechism.

26 "On ne peut exprimer les caresses qu'elles nous firent, ce qu'elles ne font jamais à leurs mères naturelles" (1971, 97).

27. First narrated in the letter of 3 September 1640 to "A Lady of Rank" as testimony to the Ursulines' accomplishments at the end of their first year in Quebec, Marie Amiskouevan's story is related a year later (24 August 1641) in thanks for the charity bestowed and to "beseech" the convent in Tour yet again "[v]ous m'obligez infiniment de [la charité] que vous nous voulez faire" (1971, 123). Repeated in *Les Relations des Jésuites*, this appeal for money is glossed with a narrative of its transformative effect. The little house and plot of land that will be provided for the seminarians will aid in their assimilation to an agricultural mode of life. "If such piety touch the hearts of many, the Savages will quit the forests to come to us: and the parents will give their children to the seminary" (*Relations*, XX, 126-27).

28. The ultimate phase in this narrative of the providential work of civilizing aboriginal girls involves Mère Marie de l'Incarnation's translation by the Catholic church into the realm of the Beatified for her miracles and visions, for her powers of eloquence in teaching and writing. An important document in the case for her Beatification was a letter from descendants of the Hurons to whom she had ministered.

29. "Nous étudions la langue Algonquine par préceptes et par méthode, ce qui m'est très difficile. Notre Seigneur néanmoins me fait la grâce d'y trouver de la facilité." (1971, 112).

SHAKESPEARE IN INDIA

Sisir Kumar Das

This paper is about Indian ambivalence to Shakespeare as manifested in Indian theatrical movements, popular culture and in the diverse modes of appropriations in Indian languages. It is only marginally related with Shakespeare studies in the country, more or less confined to a small culturally homogeneous group and preserved exclusively in the English language. Whatever be the merit or demerit of Indian contribution to Shakespeare studies, it has never claimed any cultural specificity for itself nor has it played any significant role in the history of Shakespeare dissemination to the audience outside the academic preserves. But certainly it has made Shakespeare the most prestigious cultural symbol for the educated middle class, which no serious study of the Indian reception of Shakespeare can ignore.

In February this year¹ an Indian politician while being hustled off to the prison on a criminal charge, solemnly declared his determination to fight for justice with a quotation from Shakespeare, "Fight for the last straw when honour is at stake." This unexpected reverence for Shakespeare was prominently flashed in the media and one of the newspapers suggested that a more relevant quotation in the context of the financial bunglings in the country would have been Iago's words "put money in thy purse..." Only within a week the same newspaper ridiculed another political figure for misquoting the last lines of *Macbeth*, that his speech was indeed 'signifying nothing.' Despite the frivolities involved in these incidents, they are symptomatic of an attitude of the English educated Indians for whom Shakespeare is a cultural icon. The legacy of this syndrome can be traced back to the early nineteenth century, even before English was introduced as the official language of India. But by the beginning of the second half of the century apotheocization of Shakespeare was already on the way. An inebriated hero in a Bengali play written in the last century who enjoyed tremendous popularity for his unusual flare for quoting lines from English poets, particularly from Shakespeare is probably the first

major literary evidence of a cultural syndrome that emerged in our colonial history.

Shakespeare is certainly the most venerable figure in the two-century-old history of Indian response to Western literature. There had been other writers, Milton, Shelley, Byron and Eliot as well as Molière, Ibsen and Brecht who had made recognizable impact on Indian literary community at different periods. But either the impact was shortlived or restricted to a very small group. Indian response to Shakespeare not only is wide-spread, stretching over a vast region conspicuous by its linguistic and cultural diversities, but also of the longest duration so far as any other foreign writer is considered. The Indian engagement with Shakespeare that began almost from the initial phase of Indo-British encounter and which continues still today, fifty years after the end of the Raj, is not simply an issue of literary history involving the problematics of influence and impacts, reception and survival, but an integral part of larger questions of politics and culture in a colonial situation. The introduction of Shakespeare in India in the academic sphere being a part of a well designed project of replacement of the indigenous literary canons and sensibilities by a superior body of literary models was itself an act of far-reaching political implications. Even a quick glance at the history of Shakespeare reception in India confirms the intimate relationship between the process of apotheosization of the bard and the growth of an English educated community that accepted Western literary canons without offering much resistance, and defended them with the zeal of the Romans for the Hellenic models. "I do not know," writes Nirad C. Chaudhuri, one of the greatest anglophiles of contemporary India, "if any other country or people in the world has ever made one author the epitome, test and symbol of literary culture as we Bengalis did with Shakespeare in the nineteenth century."² Whether such an euphoria for a foreign author was a sign of cultural dislocation of a people, a temporary aberration of a unique case of literary reception recognizing the greatness of a genius, is not easy to answer. But the Indian reception of Shakespeare is indeed one of the most complex and problematic in the history of cultural contacts. Among the organized institutional exercises towards the projection of Shakespeare in India, the most important was the pedagogic activities, which include the teaching of

Shakespeare to the young boys in school as well as more sophisticated studies in the institutions of higher learning. It was the class room that privileged Shakespeare to the extent not known before in the history of teaching of literature in India.³ The tradition of Shakespeare teaching in India as the most prestigious academic exercise, and as a liberalizing influence of the Western thought began with Derozio⁴ — who was incidentally the first Indian to write a poem in English admiring Shakespeare — and Captain D. L. Richardson whose reading of Shakespeare had marvelled many of his contemporaries including Macaulay⁴ — continued uninterrupted in the Indian universities till the 1950s, and though the place of English literature in Indian educational system is being reviewed, it is still highly respectable. The importance of Shakespeare in Indian educational institutions was defined and legitimized by programmes in the British universities: the anglicised India overawed by the enormity of the thriving Shakespeare scholarship, and by the political power associated with the English language almost dutifully worked to perpetuate the image of Shakespeare in India as “the melodious Priest of a true Catholicism, the universal Church of the Future and of all times, ” the way Carlyle described him.⁵

The mode of dissemination of Shakespearean texts played the most significant role in the formation of the relationship between the Indian intelligentsia and the bard, and it also caused a sharp rift in the Indian literary community itself. It is historically interesting that Shakespeare first spoke to Indians from the stage as he did to Englishmen. Calcutta had a play house even before it had a Church, in 1756 ; which was followed by a few more including one opened by Englishmen sent out by David Garrick. These built and maintained by subscription raised from the British residents of the city were intended almost exclusively for them. The appearance of Shakespeare on the stage in India was part of a ceremony of imperial power. Till a new Indian theatre that grew under British influence, had welcome Shakespeare before an Indian audience, the classroom was our theatre and the teacher performer. It is quite appropriate that some of the finest teachers of Shakespeare in India were known for their histrionics and atleast one great Indian actor of the colonial period started his career as a Shakespeare teacher.

While the most singular contribution of the classroom to the modern Indian cultural life is the creation of Shakespeare as the most prestigious and dominating cultural symbol, the classroom has been systematically condemned for its insensibility to the works of art. Every Indian admirer of Shakespeare is highly critical of the system that has transformed spoken words into printed texts, that has replaced visuality by exigeses, and performability by hermeneutics. The visuality of the Shakespearean drama remained almost totally outside the Indian experience. The perception of Shakespeare that dominated the Indian psyche was, therefore, blurred, distorted and fragmented, it had developed almost entirely on scholarship and not the experience emanating from performance on the stage. The Shakespeare that emerged in Indian classroom was not primarily a creation of the Indian aesthetic consciousness, but mainly, if not entirely out of the received readings of Shakespeare, readings determined by the British critics. The Indian academic activity was not expected to question or challenge the existing paradigms of criticism; but to accept the greatness of the bard as an undisputable fact of literary history. The academic reception of Shakespeare within the rigidities of an imposed critical framework was further obtruded, ironically by the dominance, and exclusive use, of the English language in scholarly communication. It remained encoded and frozened in an alien language. Without the slightest disrespect to the Indian Shakespeare scholars and the large body of work produced by them, one can say with some justification that the contribution of the educational institutions in the history of Indian reception of Shakespeare is largely towards the construction of a canonical image of the playwright. The knowledge produced in the academies has hardly infiltrated into the larger literary community which responded to Shakespeare in an unsystematic manner but perhaps more creatively and with a greater measure of freedom. The factor that differentiates the nature of reception in the academy from that of the creative writers, the common reader and the theatre, is the language: English, and exclusively English in the former, and Indian languages in the latter.

It is not just the translations⁶ or adaptations or plagiarisms of Shakespeare texts in different languages that created this sharp and radical difference between the two varieties of responses. What deserves

special attention is the great tension caused by them (as well as the knowledge of the original texts) within the existing literary traditions. The texts both the original and their various reincarnations in different Indian languages did challenge the existing order with a violence, presenting an altogether different world. The scholars, of course, had realised this better but they never took the responsibility to integrate their experience with their own cultural idiom. At best it remained a personal experience, deep, moving and noble; at worst it was a bewilderment to be lived with. The scholarly world resisted to accommodate these specific facts of interactions between two cultures and, therefore, also remained free and undisturbed from the problems of integrating Shakespeare into different cultural and linguistic spaces, that were confronted by the translators, as well as writers and theatre persons. The writers, translators and theatre persons had to negotiate with an exotic world, that of Shakespeare, and to invest their experience of that world into their own languages. This resulted in a fracture in the Indian literary sensibility and finally into the emergence of an alternative paradigm of values. There were persons protesting the hegemony of English in our cultural life and even questioning the universality of Shakespeare. History of that protest, a long and tortured one, is not easy to construct fully since the voices of resistance⁷ were effectively marginalized by the power-elite. Not only did it accept the Western literary models but also constructed a theory of cultural borrowing to give legitimacy to their defence of Western literature.

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, eulogized and condemned as the father of Hindu nationalist, declared without any qualms that Shakespeare was "the immortal poet of universal human nature," "the only man in the world's literature whose works hold up a mirror to every possible phases of man's inner life."⁸ Another Bengali poet, known for his patriotic poems—one of his poems was banned by the British government on the charge of sedition—wrote much to the embarrassment of the Sanskrit scholars, "Kalidasa belongs to India, Shakespeare to the world!" Michael Madhusudan Datta, another anglicized Bengali and also the architect of a new school of Bengali poetry, wrote in defence of his choice of Shakespearean model of dramatic construction in preference to the Sanskritic: "In the great European drama you have the stern realities

of life, lofty passion, and heroism of sentiment. With us it is all softness, all romance."⁹

The most far-reaching impact of this adulation of the British dramatist was not so much on the growth of a new dramatic literature in many Indian languages — the impact however was quite comprehensive and powerful— but a much deeper one, affecting both dramatic and non-dramatic literature, challenging the Hindu vision of life (and changing it to some extent) which denied tragedy in scheme of things. The experience of tragedy by the Indians was not only ennobling but extremely disturbing. This initiated a tension between two cultures, two ontological systems. Bankim's use of the metaphors of sea and garden in his critique of *Othello* and *Shakuntala* respectively are too appropriate and suggestive for this experience. This sea, he writes about *Othello* "is deep and complex, dynamic and tumultuous... Like the sea itself (it) is raging with the waves of emotion, rushing in speed driven by the winds of love and jealousy" in contrast to the "beautiful and pleasant" *Shakuntala*.¹⁰ This view of Shakespeare as a poet of a larger, more complex and complete vision dominated the Indian response, the existence of a condescending voice notwithstanding. Tagore, who constructed several of his early plays on Shakespearean model and wrote a glowing tribute to the bard, had a definite ambivalence reflecting an ideological stance. His essay on *Sakuntala*¹¹ is probably the strongest defence of the Sanskrit play and the world view projected in it, with reference to *The Tempest* and the traditional Indian view of suffering. In both the playwrights he notices a "secret vein of complaint against the artificial life of the king's court," but to Shakespeare "nature offers no message or balm to the injured soul of man." In *Cymbeline* the forest and the cave appear in "their aspect of obstruction of life's opportunities," the forest of Arden in *As You Like It* is "didactic in its lessons", the tragic intensity of *Hamlet* and *Othello* is "unrelieved by any touch of Nature's eternity," in *The Winter's Tale* the cruelty of a king's suspicion stands bare in its relentlessness, and Nature covers before it, offering no consolation," Tagore, thus, represents the Indian critique of Shakespeare who, he thinks, "fails to recognize in them (in his plays) the truth of the interpenetration of human life with the cosmic life of the world." Vidyasagar translated *The Comedy of Errors* and his translation is

obviously a glowing evidence of his admiration for the British bard but he did not share the enthusiasm of Bankim or Michael and certainly not the criticism of Kalidasa. Bharatendu Harishchandra who had translated *The Merchant of Venice* into Hindi under the title *Durlabh Bandhu*, like Vidyasagar admired Shakespeare but would not accept Hemchandra Bandyopadhyay's panegyric, 'Bharater Kalidas Jagater tumi' (Kalidas belongs to India, you to the world) Aurobindo's response to Shakespeare is probably the most typical of Indian ambivalence. In 1929 he wrote of the 'divine tenderness of the Hindu nature' which he notices in Kalidas and Lear and Macbeth belong to "the cruder civilizations and more barbarous national types"¹²

In an earlier essay, however he admitted that Sanskrit drama "did not rise to the" greatness of the Greek or the Shakespeare drama" and this was not because of absence of tragedy, but he thought, "due to the absence of any bold dramatic treatment of the great issues and problems of life."¹³

The early adaptations and translations reflected the Indian ambivalence to Shakespeare very explicitly, not simply by its preference for the comedies over tragedies, not even by the alternations and restructuring of the texts, but at times transforming the tragedies into happy ending plays. Shankar Mora Ranade's Marathi adaptation of *King Lear* as *Atipid Charit Natak* (1881), a play ending with a happy note, with no death of characters, strongly justified in its preface, was not, as one may think, Indian inability to grasp the grimness of the great play, but an exercise in interpreting one complex cultural text to an equally complex cultural community. The existence of the ambivalence is to be further observed in the history of the Indian stage. There has been no English language theatre in India worth its name: the occasional staging of Shakespeare in English is either a part of cocurricular activities in educational institutions or a sudden outburst of Shakespeare enthusiasm of the high-brow theatre troupes which do not have any relation with the mainstream Indian theatre. Indian languages are the major instruments of negotiation between Shakespeare and the theatre audience in India. A popular theatre, known as the *Parshi* theatre, established towards the end of the last century was quick to discover the commercial potentialities of Shakespeare. They presented the plays often in mutilated forms in accompaniment

with loud music, extravagant costumes and spectacles, to the great satisfaction of the audience without any access to English education. This 'vulgarization' of Shakespeare much to the embarrassment of the academic circle played a historical role as much in the popularization of a foreign author as in the subversion of the cultural values associated with him. The more serious theatre concerned with the strategies of appropriation of Western dramatic traditions responded to Shakespeare with greater anxiety, towards a synthesis between the traditions of music, stage and styles of acting in two different cultures.¹⁴ The history of modern Indian stage is a history of this encounter of traditions involving a long and complex process of experiments throughout the colonial period.

The political independence of India did not immediately bring any significant change in the Indian relationship with Shakespeare. Carlyle's choice between the Empire and Shakespeare was guided by his vision of unity of the English speaking people — "virtually one nation" — and the domination of the British bard over a much larger empire than the Indian. Any such vision of the extended bonds of Saxondom is irrelevant for India but the legacy of the Empire still persisting in Indian psyche, manifested in the form of an aggressive Euro-Centricism, is a factor determining and conditioning the Indian response to Shakespeare.¹⁵ The signs of change in the attitude of the Indian writers and translators and theatre persons towards Shakespeare are clearly visible. The signs of change began to appear with the realisation of the new possibilities that opened up through highly provocative body of new interpretations, particularly by the leftist critics beginning with A.A. Smirnov and Lunacharsky, their crudities notwithstanding and more because of the new incarnations of Shakespeare texts in films as well as on the stage outside England. The revolution in theatre brought about by Stainslavsky, the impact of the production of *Coriolanus* by Brecht, alongwith the defiant films of Akira Kurosawa and Grigori Kozintsev interpreting Shakespearean texts from their own cultural moorings and political ideologies created opened a new world of challenges for the Indians. The films of Kurosawa that changed the Japanese response to Shakespeare from a mere academic discipline to radical appropriations with strong political overtones appealed the Indian creative writers tremendously.¹⁶ When Kozintsev talked about *changing* Shakespeare in a *changing* world

instead of Shakespeare in a changing world¹⁷ with reference to the Moscow Art Theatre production of Gordon Craig's *Hamlet*, it found an immediate and warm response in India searching for new strategies of appropriation of Shakespeare. The production of *Coriolanus* by Brecht or the production of Stanislavsky were not within the direct experience of the Indian scholars and Indian theatre persons but films by several directors, more particularly by the non-English, made a deep impression on the Indian mind. John Collick in his well-documented work *Shakespeare, Cinema and Society* (1989) argues convincingly how the new productions of Shakespeare particularly those of Kurosawa questioned the orthodox criticism and adopted new modes of Shakespeare appropriations. Kurosawa's attempts had certainly emboldened Indian theatre to treat Shakespeare with greater courage. Even before the proper growth of political criticism of Shakespeare in England and America. The Indian Writers were justifying political readings of Shakespearcan text from their historical position. Mulk Raj Anand read *The Tempest* as a "prospectus of the struggle against the powerful magician conqueror", he saw in the end of the Duke a "symbolic representation of the liquidation of the Empire." The universal significance of the play, became too clear, he claims, "to us who have known the great rebels of the Imperialist phase of history, Gandhi, Kenyatta and Lumumba."¹⁸ E. Alkazi, one of the most successful Indian directors of the plays of Shakespeare, believes that Shakespeare combines the approaches of both Brecht and Antonin Artaud, the two prophets of twentieth century theatre.¹⁹ Habib Tanvir advocates changes to invest Shakespearcan text with new meanings as one finds in Tyrone Guthrie's *Troilus and Cressida* or Orson Wells' *Julius Caesar* foregrounding the conditions of the first world war or Mussolini's Italy respectively. Utpal Dutt, the most controversial theatre personality in contemporary India, and the author of a seminal and provocative work on Shakespeare in Bengali²⁰, ridicules the psychiatric interpretations, and insists on interpretations in accordance with what he calls 'the need of the people'. He argues that plays which are entirely political — *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus* are two such plays— can be easily related to situations affecting our own era. A person deeply involved in the production of Shakespeare in independent India not only in the prosceniums but in open-air theatres in the villages Dutt claims

Shakespeare to be the dramatist closest to the people of Bengal.²¹ He is certainly one of the most important theatre personality to reflect upon the problems of Shakespeare production in our time. He ridicules the productions that wish to probe the psychology of characters without reference to the time and space in which they belong, producing *Othello*, for example, without retrence to Venice or Cyprus, analysing Iago, ignoring the social roots that produced him or Hamlet without for once suggesting the Denmark being a prison has anything to do his tragedy. He criticises the psychiatric production” for violating the visuality of the texts. Similarly he also rejects the tendency to produce Shakespeare in a bare stage with a rostrum and steps or a dark blue cloth, while he rejects any childish pictorial realism. “I suggest,” he writes, “that broad white lights are incapable of firing the imagination of the audience and they fail to create the dark streets of Cyprus or the harbour storm at the on the vaults of the melancholy Elsinore Castle as a background to the tragedy. All this is being done in the name of Shakespeare’s poetry, when Poel and Granville -Barker opened their attack in idiotic mounting, they did restore poetry. At the moment, however, poetry has been made a fetish and the point has been reached where drama has to be distorted.” Utpal Datta declares very emphatically that “we are committed to an interpretation of Shakespeare in accordance with the need of our epoch” and ridicules them who believe in producing Shakespeare as he was done in his time, “In all fairness,” he writes, “they should perform in daylight, use boys to play Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth, declaim and pise on strict adhrence to the chirologia and rediscover the Elizabethan nuances of speech.”²² Girish Karnad, a prominent playwright in Kannada, does not share Datta’s enthusiasm for Shakespeare at all and strikes a different note—“Shakespeare is not someone I grew up with... he is not like *yakshagana* has been to me— or the *Sangeet Nataks*” — denying the indispensability of Shakespeare in the growth of a new Indian theatre as claimed and believed by many. Shakespeare, thus, has become a focal point of a debate involving Europeanization as opposed to nativism, theatre of the ‘other’ as opposed to a theatre of our own suffering and struggle. This processes of Shakespeare reception in India today is problematized by this plurality of attitude and experiences, by the diversity of interpretations as well as strategies of appropriations. In no

other period of the long history of Indian reception of Shakespeare did so many talented authors and actors — Rangeya Raghav, Amrit Rai, Bachan, Raghuvir Sahay, Sardar K.M. Panikker, Masti Ayyenger, Firaq Gorakhpuri, V.V. Shirvadkar, Utpal Datta to name some of them— take up the challenge of fresh translations in modern Indian languages. In no other period our theatre exhibited such courage to transcreate Shakespeare in altogether different dramatic modes: Habib Tanveer's *A Mid Summer Night's Dream* uses illiterate folk actors and folk music and choreography; and Sadanam Balakrishna presents *Othello* in *Kathalkali* idiom, a dance form of Kerala — challenging the school of adulatory experts arguing for producing Shakespeare strictly according to the conventions of Western stage, if not within the ambience of the theatre for which he wrote. Equally significant are the productions aiming at deconstructing the myth employed by Shakespeare to suit the contemporary predicaments of life. A young director, N. K. Sharma, producing Edward Bond's *Lear* recently in Delhi, claims that a play that strips Shakespeare's text of its tragic grandeur and brings it down the level of the twentieth century human experience is ideally suited to a time devoid of all idealism. All these indicate that the process of negotiation with Shakespeare has been initiated by the Indian literary community in its own terms. Nevertheless whether Shakespeare will survive in India as a book of quotable utterances, or as a memory of imperial power, as a cultural icon or as a source of challenge to the Indian literary community, outside the scholarly world, it is too early to predict.

NOTES

1. This paper was presented at a conference of the International Shakespeare Association at Los Angeles in April 1996.

2. Nirad C. Chaudhuri, *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* (London : 1951), Jaico, India, p. 196.

3. For an interesting and informative study see Swapan Majumdar, *Bidyayatanik Shakespeare* (Academic Shakespeare), *Jadavpur Journal of Comparative Literature*, 20-21, 1982-83, Jadavpur University, Calcutta, pp. 94-117.

4. Henry V. L. Derozio, 'Juliet', *Poems*, Calcutta, 1827
5. 'If I were to forget everything of India, I could never forget your reading of Shakespeare'— this sentence has been quoted by Manmathanath Ghosh, *Manishi Bholanath Chandra*, Calcutta, 1932, p. 266, also see Majumdar, *op. cit.*, p. 103.
6. Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero Worship and Heroic in History*, London, 1897, p. 135.
7. The number of translations of Shakespeare's works was quite large though very few had withstood the test of time. For details see *Shakespeare in India*, National Library, Calcutta, 1964, also *A Tribute to Shakespeare*, ed. Sunita Paul, Theatre and Television Associates, New Delhi, 1989.
8. See Ranjee G. Shahani, *Shakespeare Through Eastern Eyes*, London, 1932. This is a frank and courageous exposition of a view contesting the universalism of Shakespeare. Shahani calls the book 'an essay in anthropology.' "It is intended as a frank exhibition of the conflicting views of East and West concerning things that matter. It seems that Truth is not one."
- Sahani finds Shakespeare's outlook feudal, and he criticises him for his exaltation of monarchy and divine right, for his depreciation of the mob, his reverent attitude towards the church and his conservatism. John Middleton who has written the introduction of this book is quite baffled by Sahani's ruthlessness. Sahani concludes the book with a chapter entitled 'Revulsions' and predicts that Shakespeare in India will remain more and more the monopoly of conservatives in society, politics and philosophy. He thought he spoke on "behalf of the younger generation". Some of the arguments of Sahani, particularly his emphasis on the question of ultimate nature of Reality in Indian literature were anticipated by a Bengali writer, Purnachandra Basu in an article entitled 'Sahitye Khun' (Murder in Literature) written in the last decade of the nineteenth century, *Sahitya* 1302 (i.e. 1895) also included in *Samalocana Sahitya*, ed. Srikumar Bandyopadhyay and Prafulla Kumar Pal (Calcutta, 1955, 3d. ed. 1963 pp. 101-14).
9. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, 'The Confession of a Young Bengal' (1873, *Bankim Rachanabali*, III), p. 136.
10. Letter to his friend Rajnarayan Basu in 1860. In another letter Datta writes, "Some of my friends... as soon as they see a Drama of mine, begin to apply the canons of criticism that have been given forth by the masterpieces of William Shakespeare."
11. 'Sakuntala, Miranda ebam Desdemona' (1872), *Bankim Rachanabali*, Vol. II, Sahitya Samsad, Calcutta, 1964, p. 208.
12. 'Sakuntala', *Prachin Sahitya* (1907), also see 'The Religion of the Forest', *Creative Unity*, Macmillan, 1922.
13. Sri Aurobindo, *Kalidasa*, 1929. Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, 1972, Vol. III, pp. 302-06.

14. This essay, 'Indian literature' was first published in *Arya* (Dec 1918-Jan. 1920) later included in *Foundation of Indian Culture*, Sri Aurobindo Library, New York, 1953, p. 344.

15. *Bilati Yatra theke Swadeshi Theatre*. Comparative Literature Series no. 1. Jadavpur University. Ed. Subir Ray Chaudhuri, Calcutta, 1971, pp. 61-67.

16. The observations of a young professor of English are noteworthy: "Shakespeare's status, popularity and dissemination in the post-colonial India of today, nearly half a century after independence is determined to a large extent by non-literary factor, just as it was in colonial India. Then it was the Empire, now it is ELT, or the hegemony of English as the pre-eminent international language." Harish Trivedi, 'Shakespeare in India', *Colonial Transactions*, Papyrus, Calcutta, 1993, p. 33.

17. See John Collick, *Shakespeare Cinema and Society*, Manchester University Press. Manchester and New York, 1989, pp. 150f.

18. Grigori Kozintsev, *King Lear, The Space of Tragedy*, University of California Press. Berkeley, 1977, tr. by Mary Mackintosh, p. 135.

19. Proceedings of the Seminar organized by the Sahitya Akademi celebrating the quarter centenary of Shakespeare, 5 December-8 December 1964, p. 17.

20. *Ibid*.

21. *Shakespeare-er Samaj Chetana*, Calcutta, 1972. In this closely argued, ideologically motivated work, Dutt challenges the conventional a-political reading of Shakespeare and argues with conviction and passion, for a political Shakespeare. Dutt anticipates some of the arguments of Sidney Finkelstein, *Whose Who Needs Shakespeare?* (International Publishers, New York, 1973) was published one year later. Despite certain similarities the authors differ in their mode of argument and analytical temper.

22. Raychaudhuri, *op.cit.*, p. 67.

23. Quoted from the Proceedings of the Seminar organized by the Sahitya Akademi, *op.cit.*

ENGLAND, ENGLISH LITERATURE, AND THE ENGLISH THROUGH INDIAN EYES

Meenakshi Sharma

India's association with England has been a long and multi-faceted one. The long trade association between the two countries, the British rule of India for over two centuries, the long-drawn freedom struggle, the British withdrawal from India, are some of the landmarks in this relationship between the two countries. There have prevailed and still prevail, very diverse views about the extent to which England, Englishness and English language and literature got stamped upon the Indian mind and character but the fact itself cannot be disputed by anyone. The most surprising aspect of this issue is that it is after India's Independence that the most visible effects of this stamping of England can be seen in the increasing Westernisation of its literate classes and the prolific growth of Indian writing in English. With the resilience and power to absorb alien cultures that had marked India's political and cultural history through countless invasions and infiltrations, English language and literature were appropriated to a large extent by India. Kipling proclaimed that "East is East and West is West/And never the twain shall meet" and whether indeed the two can meet or not is a matter for debate. However, what is very visible is that the two have had some kind of relationship with each other—have not been immune to each other. This is very much evident in the persistence of the theme of East-West encounter in Indian as well as British writing in English. Arnold Toynbee notes in *The World and the West* that, "in the eighteen-thirties the British rulers of India opened a window to the West for Indian minds by substituting a Western for an Islamic and a Hindu higher education in India and thereby introducing the Indians to their British rulers' own Western ideas of liberty, parliamentary constitutional government, and Nationalism" (35-36). Not only did the introduction of English as the medium of higher education result in a consciousness of Western modes of political philosophy and government, it made the wide world accessible to the educated Indian through the English

language. For most educated Indians, cultural conflict/synthesis became an important part of their mental constitution. For the Indian writer in English this becomes vitally significant. Although controversy still rages in India over the use/teaching of English, writing in English by Indians has by now a history of over a century and a half. Meenakshi Mukherjee points out how "the unabating interest...in the interaction of the two sets of values that exist side by side, and often coalesce, in twentieth century India" (Twice, 66) has resulted in the constant recurrence of the East-West motif for over half a century.

In this essay I will take up a few works by Indian writers in English which deal with the theme of the inter-action between the English and Indian cultures, and in various ways, represent England, English literature, and the English people. I have selected Raja Rao's *The Cat and Shakespeare*, R. K. Narayan's *The English Teacher*, and Anita Desai's *Bye Bye Blackbird* for the study of such representation through authors/characters/narrators who have inherited the fruits of the historical encounter between the English language and literature as well as the British rule and struggle for Independence, on the one hand, and the multi-layered Indian culture, on the other. The representations of canonical English literature are especially interesting in these and other Indian texts for the way they show English literature shaping and conditioning and, even to an extent, anglicising, Indian characters and authors. In many novels and autobiographical works we see it reflected in the responses of Indians to an England they feel they know and love through their love of English literature. Of the works I am dealing with in this article, *Bye Bye Blackbird* shows such Indians brought up on English literature facing the reality of England and re-adjusting this reality with the mental picture of England constructed from literature. Not only is the novel set in England, there are many English characters, presenting a range of "Englishness" as seen through Desai's eyes. The hero of *The English Teacher* never actually goes to England yet his scholarship, his vocation, his livelihood, and his dilemma are all tied up with the teaching of English literature. The supreme example of the fusion of English literature in profoundly philosophic Indian mind is Raja Rao's *The Cat and Shakespeare*. In this novel there is no English setting or English characters and yet it is a wonderful instance of the

most effortless co-mingling of what would be assumed to be two worlds poles apart—that of Shakespeare's plays and that of Vedantic philosophy.

I will begin with Raja Rao's *The Cat and Shakespeare* which, with its very title evokes curiosity about how Shakespeare fits into a novel subtitled "A Tale of Modern India". The title is an example of the extent to which English literature has become the inheritance of the educated Indian who can use it as naturally in their writing as the Hindu philosophic background they have inherited. According to C. D. Narasimhaiah, Raja Rao is here "reassuring himself and others that the Indian who learnt his English from Shakespeare and the rest in his study of English literature, has made the language his, put it to many uses, clumsily perhaps, and pompously at times, but also profoundly and without decoration" (163). In Govindan Nair he presents us with "an Indian who adapts Shakespeare to his own needs, his spiritual needs", who uses syntax and vocabulary that is recognisably Shakespearian and yet, "by making minimal change Raja Rao can infuse an Indian sensibility and lift it to a spiritual plane" (Narasimhaiah, 164).

The Cat and Shakespeare was published in 1965 although a version entitled *The Cat* had already appeared six years earlier. M. K. Naik points out in his *History of Indian Literature* that "the cat is drawn from Ramanujacarya's (11th century) philosophy of Modified Non-dualism, according to which man can save himself not through knowledge but through self-surrender" (171), but he feels that "the addition of Shakespeare to the title was an afterthought" (172). However, Shakespeare is present not only in the title "as an afterthought" but is interestingly and intricately bound up with the very philosophical basis of the book. Shakespeare permeates the entire book as thoroughly as the cat does. Not only does Nair adopt the framework of the soliloquy "to be or not to be" in "to be or not to be. No, no / A kitten sans cat that is the question" (82), he generally speaks in a style which is described as "a mixture of *The Vicar of Wakefield* and Shakespeare" (10). There are echoes of, and references to, not only *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *The Tempest*, and *A Winter's Tale*, but to Eliot, Keats, Socrates, Coleridge; even Milton, Dante and Goethe. All this in a book which is subtitled "A Tale of Modern India". A whole world accessed through the English language and English literature has been effortlessly absorbed in this "Tale of Modern India".

Almost at the opening of the book *Pai*, the narrator, says about the Dutch cannon balls in the fields, "strange how we transform all things into ours" (8). This is a good analogy of the ways in which Raja Rao transforms the English languages and Shakespeare, as well as English literature at large, into his own. Although the book is not set in England nor has any English character, some kinds of representations of them creep in almost by themselves. When Pai gets boils he is certain "they're of British make, and like everything British, it works without your knowing. Govindan Nair has a simple definition : 'Britain has no secret service - Britain is secret service. Hitler has bombs, the British have boils' " (16). In fact, Nair's principle of non-duality tells him "you do not suffer because you are the British hobo. Ah, brother, you too be British" (27). Before this non-duality the boundaries and distinctions disconcertingly dissolve away leaving us looking in vain for objects on which to stick our labels of "Indian" and "British". In the light of this it becomes difficult to see Pai's dreams of taking his mistress Shantha to London, Paris and New York as the star-struck colonial's fascination with the 'centre' but rather the very distinction between 'centre' and 'periphery' ; 'home' and 'overseas', is annihilated. The world of Shakespeare comes alive and becomes real in the Indian ration shop. As Govindan Nair says, "Shakespeare knew every mystery of the ration shop. Here however we haven't to murder a brother to marry his wife. Here we marry whom we like...the dead are not buried in ration shops. There will be no grave scene. Ophelia will die but she will have no skull left for Hamlet, a future Hamlet to see" (82). Even the statement of non-dualism : "there's cat only. All cats belong to one species — cat. Call it cat or call it *marjara* which is Sanskrit or better still call it *poochi* which is Malayalam, its the same" (85) is also a re-statement of the Shakespearian "a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." Like Shakespeare in *The Tempest*, Raja Rao too allows his characters to transcend the world while belonging to it. Seen thus Govindan Nair figures, as Narasimhaiah points out, not as Hamlet or Lear but "as an emancipated man like Prospero who...put his faith in 'Providence divine' and believed in 'the rarer action' "(133). Even in "the big boss won't accept the account" can be heard an echo of the drunken porter in *Macbeth* saying "you can't equivocate to Heaven". Such instances of

the revitalisation and re-location and even re-interpretation of Shakespearian thought and philosophy could be cited for pages from this slim book that encapsulates more than a whole world in it.

It would be interesting to turn from Raja Rao with his rare achievement of extending the philosophical principle of non-duality derived from the Upanishads and Vedas to include Shakespeare, and along with him, English literature, culture and thought, to take a look at R. K. Narayan's *The English Teacher*. This last novel of Narayan before India gained Independence is neatly divisible into two parts of which the second half is much weaker than the first in its inability to "effortlessly make the supernatural natural" because of which "this tame exercise in spiritualism is hardly convincing" (*History*, Naik 162). The first half, however is what concerns me here with its fresh look into the dilemma of Krishnan, a young Indian, educated in the English language and well-read in English literature, now an English teacher himself and torn between the demands of his profession and his awareness of the alienness of what he tries to impose on the young minds of his students. As he takes stock of his daily life at the beginning of the novel his disillusionment with reading "for the fiftieth time Milton, Carlyle and Shakespeare" (5) and with "admonishing, cajoling and browbeating a few hundred boys of Albert Mission College so that they might mug up Shakespeare and Milton and secure high marks" (5) comes strongly across. Further he confesses that all his interest in teaching them is that their high marks would "save me adverse remarks from my chiefs" (5). The chief, an Englishman called Brown irritates and upsets him with his "lecture on the importance of the English language and the need for preserving its purity" and by his claim that his "thirty years in India had not been ill-spent if they had opened the eyes of the Indians to the need for speaking and writing correct English" (6). All the teachers toe the line but Krishnan himself feels that "there are blacker sins in the world than a dropped vowel", referring to the dropping of 'u' from 'honours' that had sparked off Brown's lecture. The rebelliousness of his questions to Mr. Gajapathy (Assistant Professor of English) : "ask Mr. Brown if he can say in any of the two hundred Indian languages : 'The cat chases the rat'. He has spent thirty years in India" (6), is part of the disaffection and self-rebelliousness which

he admits at the opening of the novel. Gajapathy with a life-time of unquestioning loyalty to the English language and literature has more in common with the characters of Anita Desai's *Bye Bye Blackbird* and *Clear Light of Day* and probably with Nirad C. Chaudhari than with Krishnan who has a very practical use for the heavy volume of Taine's *History of English Literature*—for making his alarm clock stop shrieking and for propping up the looking-glass. As he mechanically teaches his class from the "Verity edition of *Lear*" he wonders at his own performance. While he recognises that he is merely "a man who had mugged earlier than they the introduction and the notes in the Verity edition of *Lear*" (12) he finds himself lecturing "this is the very heart of the tragedy...follow this portion with the greatest attention" (13). However, even in this self-critical mood, as he reads the play he is "moved by the force and fury of the storm contained in these lines. The sheer poetry of it carried me on...at the thought of helpless humanity I nearly broke down" (13). He can himself feel the passion of the lines but is, at the same time aware of all the "traps that the English language sets for foreigners" (15). The figure of the boy who had not understood a word of the poem "My Days Among the Dead are Past" and had yet written two pages about it could represent, in Narayan's gently ironic way, the typical Indian student and "lover" of English literature.

Krishnan's father is another example of the educated Indian "brought up on Pater and Carlyle and Scott and Browning, personally looked after by Dr. William Miller, Mark Hunter and other eminent professors" (19). In the early years of his marriage Krishnan tries introducing his wife to English literature—beginning with *Ivanhoe*, Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* and *The Golden Treasury*. Her genuine amusement over the sentiments of English love poetry show how "foreign" it is to the Indian sensibility. Krishnan himself, it is revealed, has written, in poetry, his "most cherished thoughts on life and nature and humanity" (45). There is an unfinished poem on "an epic scale" to which he keeps adding "a few dozen lines whenever my conscience stirred in me". However, he has yet to make up his mind about whether English or Tamil "was to be enriched with my contributions to its literature" (45). On one occasion he writes out "She was a Phantom of Delight" and presents

it to his wife after putting on an act of looking at her for inspiration and then writing. She is unsuspecting and full of admiration but he gives the game away by telling her "it is a pity that you should have underrated me for so long...if possible don't look at the pages, say roughly between 150 and 200 in the *Golden Treasury*. Because some one called Wordsworth has written similar poems" (47). This incident involving Wordsworth's sonnet on "the angle in the house" reminds us that Narayan's picture of homely bliss and the trivialities that make up domestic life that Narayan has drawn in this novel, is in the same general vein as the sonnet.

Krishnan's dream of taking his wife to England and Europe once he makes a lot of money out of the books he is going to write is shattered by her tragic death. He reaches a state of mind where "there is no escape from loneliness and separation...wife, child, brothers, parents, friends...we come together only to go apart again" (177). In his search for a harmonious existence he decides to exclude everything that disturbed that harmony. He plans to write a letter "which would be a classic in its own way" wherein :

he was going to explain why I could no longer stuff Shakespeare and Elizabethan metre and Romantic poetry for the hundredth time into young minds and feed them on the dead mutton of literary analysis and theories and histories, while what they needed was lessons in the fullest use of the mind. This education had reduced us to a nation of morons ; we are strangers to our own culture and camp followers of another culture, feeding on leavings and garbage. (178)

Strong words for the mild Narayan, but they are, as it were, offered and then withdrawn, because Krishnan finally writes no such letter. The episode is made humorous by Krishnan's realisation that it sounds more like an article which could be entitled "Problems of Higher Education", and so all he writes in his resignation letter is "I beg to tender my resignation for personal reasons" (179). Even at the interview with Mr. Brown he doesn't repeat the sentiments of the letter he had torn up when asked "do you mean to say that all those poets and dramatists have meant nothing to you?" (180). What he does say is "I revere them and I hope to give them to these children for their delight and enlightenment, but in a different measure and in a different manner" (180). He seems to echo Narayan's own position on the English language and literature when

he says that only a "fool could be insensible" to Shakespeare's sonnets or the "Ode to the West Wind" or "A Thing of Beauty is a Joy Forever" but what he is up against is not English literature but "the whole methods and approach of a system of education which makes us morons, cultural morons, but efficient clerks for all your business and administrative offices." (179).

This novel written in the political turbulence of pre-Independence India surprisingly does not even touch upon the British rule in India. R. K. Narayan's opinion could be that of Gajapathy who says that "politics need not butt in everywhere. There are times when I wish there was no politics in the world and no one knew who was ruling and how" (16). In the world of Narayan it does seem that this ideal state has been reached where it is not necessary to bring in questions of who rules over whom and how.

Finally, I would like to turn to *Bye Bye Blackbird*, Anita Desai's sensitive novel about Indian immigrants in England. Not only does the novel give a vivid picture of England as seen through the eyes of the two Indians—Adit and Dev, it also has many English characters. There is, most importantly, Sarah, Adit's English wife; the landlady, Emma Moffit, who has a soft corner in her heart for India and Indians; Adit's mother-in-law, Mrs. Roscommon-James; the Millers with whom Adit boarded in his bachelor days; the teachers in Sarah's school; and many other unnamed, minor English characters who make up the background of the novel.

In the picture of Dev we see the new immigrant coming to England with a mental baggage of literature-acquired concepts about England, its institutions and people. On his first day in London he is eager to go to a pub—a place he associates with the city through many Victorian novels. On reaching one he "recognises" the "mullioned windows", the "horse brasses" shining against the stained woodwork, the "casks" and mugs and "portly British faces" (11). Desai points out that despite having lived the twenty two years of his life in a world not even remotely resembling the "King's Arms" Pub, he instantly recognises it all : "he had known them all, he had met them before, in the pages of Dickens and Lamb, Addison and Boswell, Dryden and Jerome K. Jerome" (11). An education at the St. Xavier's School in Calcutta run by black-forked

Jesuits, has "well prepared" him to enter this world "by fifteen years of reading the books that had been his meat and drink, the English books that had formed at least one half of his conscious existence" (11). When he comes out on the High Street he feels like a stranger but there is recognition here too though in a surrealistic way, for the unfamiliar and strange street has echoes of the malls in many an Indian hill station which he now realises, were only imitations of what he is now seeing. Adit, however, can make no sense of this comparison. Nor does he give a thought to the boy on the bus who calls them "wog", while Dev gets so upset that he "did not invoke the names of Johnson and Boswell again, or of Dryden and Pope, but chewed an unlit cigarette and sucked its *black, bitter* shreds" (emphasis added, 16).

Something resembling Raja Rao's great vision in *The Cat and Shakespeare* that could fuse Vedantic philosophy and canonical English literature, is suggested in Dev's reaction of exultation and awe on seeing the Battersea power station, "can't you see the *puja* being conducted...by priests in saffron robes and maidens in vestal white? Can't you see the great bonfire they've built inside and the herbs, the spices and magic potions they hurl into it? Can't you hear the clanging of great gongs...in the innermost heart of that temple?" (62) he asks Adit and begins to recite a Vedantic, Sanskrit hymn to Fire. In the National Gallery too Dev delights in "seeing the originals of what he has so far only seen reproductions. He is not so much discovering...as recognising them" (68). When Adit points out "Rotten Row" to him he scornfully replies: "of course I know. You don't have to tell me...I have always known them...ever since I could read" (73). Both Adit and Dev, "brought up as they were on dog-eared copies of Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*" (78) begin to chant lines from "Upon Westminster Bridge". When he sits in a London coffee bar "London's history shrank and crept closer to him, cositly, familiarly, with Dr. Johnson and Boswell tripping down the road to their coffee bar next door and Dryden having a session of his own across the road" (116).

Despite never having seen the English countryside Dev has a clear picture of it in his mind. As soon as Sarah suggests going down to her parent's home, he groans "but that's all downs and sheep and long walks, isn't it?" (143). However, once he is persuaded to go there he

is so struck by its beauty that he asserts that he can better appreciate the beauty of England than the English themselves, who "with their newspapers, their tables and chairs, their litterbins and playpens" (195) could never really know "this treasure they owned, this rich, abundant beauty and green grace" (147). On his last day in the countryside he goes for a walk and, drunk on the beauty around him he thinks "this was the England her poets had celebrated so well that he, a foreigner, found every little wildflower, every mood and aspect of it eerily familiar" (195).

However, despite all the 'familiarity' with the English scene, Dev cannot easily relate to the English people themselves. Not only is he shocked at the sight of the lovers in the park, he is upset enough by the insolence of a shopkeeper to start an "obsessed search for signs of imperialist insolence in the bland manners of the British" (84). According to him "you rush out shouting, 'look this is what Milton wrote about! Look, here's Tennyson's poem in real life! Isn't it fine? Isn't it splendid?' And out comes a man with red hair, flings his duster in your face and says 'It's not for you buster'" (185). In fact, in his heart he begins to feel that "everything tells you you're an outsider and not entitled to the country just because you happen to have read and enjoyed its literature" (186).

To turn to the English people in the novel we meet Mrs. Roscommon-James who represents those of her people who have no understanding of, or sympathy with, Indians. At the tea in her home for Sarah, Adit, and their Indian friends "it was evident she was thinking that all she had heard about the filthy ways of the Asian immigrants was correct" (153). Her prejudice against them comes out when Adit tries to catch a thrush for "clevenenses", confirming for her what she had "predicted the very first time she had set eyes on him", that Sarah's Indian husband would go "stark, staring mad" (181). Even when Sarah tries to explain to her how their Indian friends are "rather like us, Mummy, and your friends—everyone a bit different from the other but not too much", she replies "I must say I see a great deal of difference even if you don't" (160). Even Emma Moffit who has, for a life-time, cultivated a love for India feels quite lost in the alien group she invites to her home for the inauguration of the "India Club". The visit to the

Millers, the former landlords of Adit again stresses the lack of communication—the inability to understand each other's subtle codes of social behaviour, speech and manner. Adit notices nothing of the condescension, coldness and downright redness of Mrs. Miller, while Sarah feels utterly humiliated.

Sarah is presented as an uncharacteristic Englishwoman, reminiscent of Richard in Kamala Markandaya's *Some Inner Fury*. We see her only after her marriage to Adit and find her vulnerable and lost in her English environment despite being English herself. In fact it is very obvious that her "unusual" marriage has set her adrift on a bewildering search for identity. She herself wonders "where was Sarah?" Because both her life at home and at work "were roles—and when she was not playing them, she was nobody. Her face was only a mask, her body only a costume" (39). Suspended between the two worlds she wonders if it would ever be possible for her to snap out of her unreal existence and "enter the real world—whether English or Indian she did not care, she wanted only its sincerity, its truth" (390). The jagged pieces of her two roles have "cut and slashed [her] into living, bleeding pieces" (43). In her own country she seems to be going through the schizophrenia which immigrants suffering in an alien land. She breaks from her English friends but cannot truly "make claims to a life, an identity she did not herself feel to be hers" (42). Adit explains her "intermittent schizophrenia" as a result of "her having been an Indian in a past incarnation and that sometimes allowed her to feel herself into an Indian mood while still able to observe herself undergoing this curious transformation with her normal Saxon detachment" (160).

The English countryside is represented in this novel as a very powerful force for the foreigners from a colonial background. The visit to the countryside proves to be a turning point in the lives of both Dev and Adit. Dev, lying in bed "all night...repeating whatever I could remember of Tennyson and Wordsworth and Browning" (178) begins to like the peace, beauty and abundance and to imagine himself as "author, painter, philosopher, living in a lonely tower, an old wind-mill, a Cornish cottage" for "wasn't it there that those blissful English authors, painters and philosophers were said to live? He could too—perhaps" (178). He could, because, as he sat by the country-stream, "England had ceased

to be an aggressor who tried to enmesh, subjugate and victimise him with the weapons of Empire, something to be taunted and mocked and fought" (265). For Adit on the other hand, the English countryside and "the beauty and contentment he had seen there that had proved too much for a mind, a stomach born to emptier, starker, less tamed and cultivated fare, and he could no longer take another insipid swallow of it" (212). His reaction is shown in his dream as the vibrant, colour picture of England suddenly turning into "negatives in ghostly black and white" (205). What is finally offered as a reason for Adit's decision to leave England where, after a struggle, he has finally achieved some success, and to return to India is "not the occasional slights and insults directed against him as a stranger, a non-belonger...but the placidity, the munificence and ease of England" (212). The novel ends with no clear statement of the fate of Indians in England except to show how the interaction is a complex and unpredictable one with too many factors contributing to the alchemy between the two cultures to make a simple and neat solution possible.

All three novels thus show some of the various ways in which England and English literature have affected the Indian mind and imagination. They also reveal the ways in which Indians have perceived the English landscape, way of life, and people, encountered indirectly through literature and through direct contact. It can be seen that generations brought up on an English system of education carry around with them a mental baggage of an "idea" of England and Englishness which is manifested in such representations of England and the English in fictional writing as have been discussed in this essay.

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TAGORE AND THE MEANING OF TRANSLATION

Bikash Chakravarty

Much ink has recently been spilled over what I consider to be a wholly misconceived debate about Tagore's failure as an English translator of his own Bengali poems. The immediate context of the debate was of course the choice of the English version made by Tagore himself of poem no. 39 in *Balaka* (originally published in *Sabujpatra* in 1915 under the title "Shakespeare") for inscription on the pedestal of his bust to be installed at Stratford-on-Avon in 1996. The choice, as we all know, was hotly contested as well as defended both at home and abroad. Those who contested generally branded the English translations made by Tagore as inadequate and incompetent. In fact, the charge, never too loud though, that Tagore did not know English well enough to have been able to overcome the problems of translation had stalked him ever since the publication of the English *Gitanjali*. Tagore himself lent so consistently to the perpetuation of this myth¹ that by 1915, a section of the English educated Bengali intelligentsia seriously entertained the rumour that the success of *Gitanjali* in English had been due to Yeats's major share in the translation.² The reason was simple. How could the bard of Santiniketan who had no formal schooling and did not go to college translate his own poems into English which would earn him the Nobel prize?

This is one aspect of the problem—an aspect into which I would not care to enter. But there is a more theoretical aspect which can be formulated in the form of a question: is the translation of a poem [into a certain target language] done by its author *necessarily* superior to the translation of the same poem [into the same target language] done by other hands? The answer to this question—which would obviously be in the negative—presupposes, among other things, that the two sets of translators involved in this case have a shared notion of what translation is and why translations are undertaken from one language into another or from one culture to another. This precisely is the point I would like to dwell upon in this paper, claiming that the notion and purpose of

translation for Tagore, at least during the years he engaged himself in rendering his Bengali poems into English for the volumes such as *Gitanjali*, *The Gardener* and *The Crescent Moon*, were significantly different from what we generally understand by translation today.

One of the basic conditions of literary translation as we know it, is that it is always under two obligations : that is, a translated piece must be faithful to its original in the source language and at the same time, it must also read like a text in the target language. But the process implicated in this formulation is not as simple and innocent as it looks, for translation is also a matter of cultural transference. To put it differently, translating from one culture to another is controlled, to a very large extent, by ideological considerations. In the Roman translation tradition, the attitude taken towards the source text and its culture reflected two extreme positions of victory and enslavement. Texts were either conquered or enslaved by the translators in their acts of translation. Horace's *Art of Poetry*, for example, admonishes scholars not to render the original texts word for word like a slavish translator. Throughout his letter on 'on the best method of translating', St. Jerome employs tropes of conquest and its antithesis, imprisonment. The worst thing for a translator, he argues, is to be enslaved, fettered or bound to the source text too closely.³

In 1860, Matthew Arnold maintained more or less the same position regarding translation in a series of three lectures he gave at Oxford subsequently published as *On Translating Homer* (1861). Arnold felt deeply concerned about the theoretical and literary implications of the recent translation of Homer's *Iliad* by Francis Newman, the brother of Cardinal Newman and sharply criticised the translated text in his second lecture (8 December, 1860). Newman responded by publishing *Homeric Translation in Theory and Practice : A Reply to Matthew Arnold* (1861)⁴ where he said that Arnold blamed him for rendering the words [of Homer] correctly. Arnold in his turn, countered with a fourth and final lecture on 30 November, 1861, "On Translating Homer : Last Words" (subsequently published as *Last Words on Translating Homer : A Reply to Francis Newman* (1862), asking : 'What is correctness in this case?... The true knowledge of Homer becomes at last, in his [Newman's] eyes, a knowledge of Homer's "peculiarities, pleasant and unpleasant". Learned

men know these “peculiarities”, and Homer is to be translated because the unlearned are impatient to know them too. “That”, he exclaims, “is just why people want to read an English Homer—to *know all his oddities, just as learned men do...*” Here then, I take my leave of Mr. Newman, retaining my opinion that his version of Homer is spoiled by his making Homer odd and ignoble.’⁵

Arnold here is clearly stating a case for conquering or domesticating the source text in translation. That is, Homer in English must look natural and universal and must be saved from terrible learning of Francis Newman which makes the familiar odd and uncomfortable. Of course, implicit in Arnold’s thesis is the assumption that the translator in this case is a native speaker of the target language and his relation with the source language and its culture is not vitiated by political power.

What happens when we subject the translations made by Tagore of his own poems into English to these notions? To begin with, the question of fidelity to the original text is perhaps the least important aspect of Tagore’s translations, although the other half of the condition—that is, the translated text must look like a text in the target language—was certainly a part of his intention. The question of ‘enslavement’ to the source text, therefore, does not arise in the case of Tagore’s translations. Secondly, Tagore was not translating from English into Bengali. His was perhaps the unique case of a major poet who decided to translate his own poems into a language of which he was not a native speaker. Thirdly, the historical context in which we find Tagore translating his poems into English was already fraught with colonial domination, involving, what Sisirkumar Das so aptly said, “a power relation between the major and minor languages.”⁶

The point I am trying to deduce from these observations is that in spite of Tagore’s intention of making his translated pieces look like texts in the target language, he could never have come to endorse the notion of translation as conquering or taming the source text in the sense in which Edward Fitzgerald conquered and tamed *Omar Khayam*⁷ or Matthew Arnold would have Francis Newman domesticate Homer. What then did Tagore want to achieve through his translations? Before I try to answer this question, I would like to examine the issue of fidelity

to the source text as one of the primary conditions of translation which Tagore so consistently flouted in translating his poems into English.

That he took a great deal of liberties with the Bengali original while rendering it into English was acknowledged apologetically by Tagore himself when he told Edward Thompson : "You are right in your diagnosis. I become actually conscious of cracks and gaps in my translations and try to cover them up with some pretty designs that may give them an appearance of wholeness. The moral is I should never have handled your language."⁸ But that was in 1921 and I am not sure if Tagore included *Gitanjali*, *The Gardener* and *The Crescent Moon* in his list of failings in translation, or whether he was talking about his later works in English such as, *Fruit-Gathering*, *Lover's Gift* and *Crossing* and *The Fugitive*, for there is a marked difference in quality between the first three volumes published in 1912-13 and the spates of translations he rushed through the press after his winning of the Nobel prize.

The frequency of such admissions regarding the shortcomings of his translations will increase considerably in the 1930s in a series of letters Tagore wrote to Amiya Chakravarty and also in letters written to William Rothenstein and Thomas Sturge Moore during this period. Here are some extracts :

- (a) "Once again I read the English rendering of my own poems. Most of the poems included in *Fruit-Gathering* and *Lover's Gift* are just not passable. I felt ashamed as I was reading them. How carelessly and incompetently did I translate them!" (To Amiya Chakravarty, 28 November 1934.)
- (b) "Glancing through these pieces I found how carelessly I had once translated them. I feel ashamed today that I did not give time enough to notice the extent to which the originals were divested of their intrinsic value in the process of transference to another language." (To Amiya Chakravarty, 21 December 1934.)
- (c) "You know when a cow stops giving milk after the death of the calf, a new straw-stuffed shape with the hide of the calf is made so that with the appearance and the smell of it milk trickles out. Translation similarly is the shape of a dead calf which deceives and does not invite. I regret it and ashamed of it." (To Amiya Chakravarty, 6 January 1935.)

- (d) "Translations can... only transfigure dancing into acrobatic tricks, in most cases playing treason against the majesty of the original ... As for myself I ought never to have intruded into your realm of glory with my offerings hastily giving them a foreign shine and certain assumed gestures familiar to you." (To Thomas Sturge Moore, 11 June 1935.)

These extracts, full of regrets and repentance for what Tagore himself called 'this career of falsifying my own coins,' reveal two different responses to the question of translation. In the first two extracts, Tagore blames himself squarely for the slipshod manner in which he translated his poems into English, especially those included in *Fruit-Gathering* and *Lover's Gift*— both published after 1914. In the next two, he comes almost to the point of saying that translation is impossible, and therefore, a fruitless exercise. But on close inspection, both these responses seem to have been prompted by Tagore's rapidly declining fame and popularity as a poet in the English speaking world,¹⁰ and taken together, all four statements make a striking contrast to his clearly thought out views about translation in 1912-13.

I have said that Tagore's *Gitanjali*, *The Gardener* and *The Crescent Moon* as translated works should be distinguished from his later translations. The distinction, as I see it, lies not so much in the fact that the first three texts were revised and better translated than the later works as in the fact that Tagore's translations of 1912-13 were informed by a clear sense of purpose and a theory—however loosely articulated—which his post-Nobel prize English works were not. Not that the earlier translations corresponded closely to their source texts. Far from being the case, the pieces included in the English *Gitanjali*, *The Gardener* and *The Crescent Moon* are generally abridged or otherwise modified versions of the original poems. Some are only partial translations of the original, while sometimes parts of the same original have been used to produce two separate poems in translation. In a few cases, two or three original poems have been telescoped into a single translation. To take two instances from the English *Gitanjali*, no.39 combines nos. 5 and 6 from the Bengali *Naivedya*, while nos. 89 and 90 from the same source text (*Naivedya*) are fused to become no. 95 in the target text.

My contention is that such liberties as Tagore took while rendering his original Bengali poems into English were not a matter of carelessness but part of his intention right from the beginning when he first took the momentous decision of translating *Gitanjali* in 1912. The decision, in all probability, was hastened by Roby Dutta's translations included in *Echoes from East and West* (1909).¹¹ Tagore read the book in the summer of 1911 and about a year after, barely a fortnight before his departure for England, Tagore wrote to Pamathalal Sen : "Roby Dutta's translations of my poems have not come off well at all... *I cannot expect my poems to be properly translated into English, not in rhyme, at any rate.* They can be done more or less passably in unadorned prose. If possible, I shall try to do it myself when I reach England." (Translated. Emphasis added.)¹² Having taken this major decision that he would himself translate his delicately rhymed Bengali lyrics into unadorned English prose, Tagore now set about to articulate his notion of translation. Interestingly, the term Tagore most frequently used for 'translation' in his Bengali correspondence of this period was not, as one would expect, *anuvad* ('speaking after'), although he did use this word occasionally, nor *rupantar* ('changed in form' or 'in changed form'), but *tarjama* (from Urdu *tarjuma*) which is nearer to 'explicate' or 'paraphrase' than to translation in modern sense. That Tagore was aware of this shade of meaning is borne out by what he said in his preface to *The Gardener* (1913): "[My] translations are not always literal—the original being sometimes paraphrased"—forewarning his readers that the pieces included in the book were not to be taken as 'translations' as the term is commonly understood. Some seven months before *The Gardener* was published, he wrote to Harriet Moody from England : "Rathi has been typing my poems—I won't call them translations."¹³

But the most revealing document of what Tagore understood by translation, especially with respect to his own poems, is to be found in the letter he wrote to Ajitkumar Chakravarty on 13 March, 1913. Considering its importance as a loosely strung theory of translation, the letter needs to be quoted at some length :

"... what I like best is when I do my own poems into English. I find the task gripping to the point of intoxication. In the act of translating into an alien tongue, I seem to find a new flavour in what I had written

originally in Bengali. It is almost like the bride's reception at her husband's home—after the wedding is over. By that time the two have already been united in holy wedlock. *But the bride must meet and make friends with the community to which she must belong henceforth. Only after the assembled guests partake joyfully of the feast from the bride's hand, her union with the husband receives the society's sanction.* When I wrote originally in Bengali, it was merely a poet's wedding with his Muse. Or, in other words, *I did not have any clearly defined objective before me other than my poetry. Now that I have got down to translating my poetry into English, it is like sending forth an invitation to everyone to partake of the feast from my bride's hand. Therefore, the flavour of this joy is somewhat different from what it was before ... Over and over again, I keep on chopping and paring, scrubbing and scouring— as if there is no end of things waiting to be attended to.*

Here, no one is prepared to accept my translations as translations ... I cannot dismiss their contention as absolutely baseless or irrelevant. *The fact is, one cannot really and truly render one's thoughts into another language... What I try to capture in my English translation is the heart and core of my original Bengali. That is bound to make for a fairly wide deviation. If I were not there to help you out, you might probably find it impossible to identify the original in the translation. For one thing, the original Bengali has shrunk to a considerable extent in the translation. That, to my mind, is only natural. In her Bengali garb, my muse has to make her appearance bedecked with all the finery and splendour that the resources of the language can command... But, suppose she has to voyage to a far-away land on her honeymoon; unless she discards the major part of her ornaments and jewellery, these may well prove a burdensome incumbrance. Or, suppose she was to go out on a pilgrimage. In that case she must travel light and not trundle her trousseau about...*

I have, therefore, assigned myself the task of dis-adorning my Muse. The traditional symbols of her marital status — the vermillion mark at the parting of her hair and the simple iron bangle — are still there. Nor has she been converted into a be-gowned memsahib... How can a Bengali bride cast off her bridal veil ! Only, the surfeit of ornaments

has been drastically cut down to give her a new look of simplicity. Therefore, when my English readers shake their heads in violent protest and claim that this transformation cannot be construed as mere translation, I cannot lightly dismiss what they say. Translated, my muse could at best find accommodation in some wayside inn on her sojourn abroad... But, no, she has been made warmly welcome into their homes, not as a visiting stranger but like a friend and relation... They have read something in her face which they see only in the face of a blood relation. They refuse to regard her as an outsider : 'She is our own, our kith and kin,' they say...

As my task of translation is oriented towards this aim, I derive a creative joy afresh out of this exercise." (Emphasis added).¹⁴

Read between the lines, the letter raises several important issues germane to a theory of translation. In a language thick with metaphors, Tagore states that translation is a passport to an international fraternity and the translated work, once being accepted by this fraternity, becomes its permanent member, 'a friend and relation.' Yet, the work retains its original cultural identity, it is not 'converted into a be-gowned memsahib.' For the translated text to achieve this status, Tagore says that faithfulness to the original, that is, faithfulness to its form, is not a necessary requirement. What is important is to 'capture the heart and core' of the source text. If we find it difficult sometimes to identify the original in Tagore's translation, the reason is not that he has translated badly, but that he has chosen to translate in a different way— by siting a body of meaning in the translated text, culled, if necessary, from more than one source text. In short, for Tagore of this period at least, any meaningful translation is an act of interpretation, located on an isthmus between translation in the usual sense and a totally new creation in the target language.

I can now begin to answer the question I have deferred so far : what did Tagore want to achieve through his English translations? I think an answer to this question involves an examination of the peculiar historical situation in which Tagore found himself in a colony and the ideological stance he developed to overcome the problem. Since I have already written about it at length elsewhere,¹⁵ I would like to put in my arguments as briefly as possible.

I want to submit that during the years roughly from 1907 to the First World War, Tagore promoted, quite persuasively, a case for culture as a power of the interpreting mind which was largely a variation of the clerisy argument derived from Coleridge, and most subtly articulated by Matthew Arnold. In effect, this meant an urgent appeal to the life of the mind and to the sense of the ideal as a perennial body of universal truths. A man of culture, in this sense, is a member of an international fraternity and his most decisive feature is that he feels freed from the pressures of historical contingency. This argument, in large measure, helped a section of the Bengali intelligentsia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to evade the deeply embedded contradictions of their colonial situation. In other words, Tagore's ideology of culture, largely drawn on Arnold's famous formulation of 'the best which has been thought and said in the world', helped restore the wounded self-respect of the Bengali elite by providing them with the necessary agenda for retaining cultural identity.

Seen in this context, Tagore's decision to translate his poetry into English takes on special significance. Sisirkumar Das, in his introduction to *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore* (Vol. I), has drawn our attention to this important aspect. Calling this a 'dilemma of linguistic choice in the nineteenth century, Das says, "The issue of linguistic choice of the Indian writer was also part of a larger problem involving a power relation between the major and minor languages."¹⁶ A major language, in this case, is 'associated with power; political, economic and ideological.' Since none of the Indian languages, in spite of their rich literary history, could satisfy these conditions in colonial India, 'the relation between English and other Indian languages was turned into a relation of opposition between a major and a minor language.' Coming to Tagore, he concludes : "Tagore's faith in the mother tongue being the national channel of literature remained unshaken, but he had to come to terms finally with the major-minor linguistic opposition that conditioned India's colonial history ... What is important is that Tagore did not surrender totally to a language of power but continued to remain a bilingual writer till the end of his life."¹⁷

To this neat formulation I should like to add that the major-minor opposition in Das's scheme would be better understood in terms of an

opposition between metropolitan and non-metropolitan or provincial. For, with Tagore, the decision to translate his own poems into English was more a cultural matter than a linguistic concern. The metropolitan is that cultural site which produces the power to legislate, to make legitimate and to authorise a cultural product. It is usually, but not necessarily, located in the city or in a major language. But the geographical or linguistic location is not important so long as it opposes provincial or regional ideas. Similarly, provincialism, as Martin Wiener put it, "has not been [in twentieth century Britain] simply a matter of remoteness from the capital city... it has been much more a question of remoteness from one approved style of life."¹⁸

The point I am trying to make is that, some rare moments of temptations notwithstanding, Tagore did not want to become an English poet through his translations. His frequent disclaimers regarding his knowledge of English may be cited as evidence. But it is more interesting to see that Tagore's translations, often distantly related to the source, are governed more by a consideration of ideas than by the principle of form and imagery. In other words, bilingualism in the case of Tagore did not mean that he could write either in English or in Bengali as he chose. He remained a Bengali poet all through his life. When he decided to translate into English he did so because he wanted to put across his ideas on a metropolitan plane. The point, I think, was unequivocally stressed by *The Times Literary Supplement* in its review of the English *Gitanjali* — which incidentally was the first important notice of the book in the Western world — on 7 November, 1912: "The chief cause of decadence in any art is impoverishment of subject-matter; and poetry is always liable to this impoverishment when it has not enough intellectual power to pass from its primitive stage of dealing with the particular to the task of dealing with the general. It must accomplish this transition, if it is to remain a living art in a society that is largely concerned with ideas." In fact, what Tagore sought for through his translations was an international community of ideas and ideals wholly opposed to provincialism or regional interests. When Ernest Rhys told Tagore that *Sadhana* — a book of philosophical essays the latter translated from Bengali into English in 1912-13 and published in 1913 — completed "gravely and seriously, your quadrant of poetry and

philosophy,"¹⁹ he too was thinking of Tagore more as an interpreter of culture than as a translator in the usual sense. The indisputable success of this 'quadrant' —*Gitanjali*, *The Gardener*, *The Crescent Moon* and one book of prose, *Sadhana*, all published in 1912-13— remains a permanent proof of the fact that Tagore achieved what he had wanted to achieve through translation.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. See, for example, Tagore to Indira Devi, 6 May 1913 : "That I cannot write English is such a patent fact that I never had even the vanity to feel ashamed of it." (Tr. Indira Devi in *Indian Literature*, Vol II, No.1, pp. 3-4.) Also, Tagore to Ajitkumar Chakravarty, 4 January 1913 (Rabindra Bhavana Archives, hereafter, RB) and Tagore to Amiya Chakravarty, 7 March 1935 (*Chithipatra* 11, Calcutta : Visva-Bharati 1974).
2. See, Tagore to Thomas Sturge Moore, 17 February 1914 (Photocopy. RB) and Tagore to William Rothenstein, undated, but certainly 1914 in *Imperfect Encounter : Letters of William Rothenstein and Rabindranath Tagore*, ed. Mary M. Lago (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P. 1972), p. 147.
3. St. Jerome, "Letter LVII to Pammachius", *Letters and Selected Works*, tr. W.H. Freemantle and G. Lewis [1892] (Grand Rapids: Wm. B.Eerdmans, nd.) pp. 112-18.
4. Francis Newman, *Homeric Translation in Theory and Practice : A Reply to Matthew Arnold* (London : 1861).
5. See, *On the Classical Tradition*, ed. R.H. Super (U. of Michigan P. 1960), pp. 184-85.
6. "Introduction", *The English Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, Vol. I, ed. Sisirkumar Das (New Delhi : Sahitya Akademi 1994), p. 17.
7. See Edward FitzGerald to E. B. Cowell, 20 March 1856 : "It is an amusement to me to take what liberties I like with these Persians who (as I think) are not poets enough to frighten one from such excursions, and who really do want a little Art to shape them." Cited in Harish Trivedi, *Colonial Transactions : English Literature and India* (Calcutta : Papyrus 1993), p. 45.
8. Tagore to Edward J. Thompson, 5 August 1921, Photocopy. RB.
9. The first three extracts are translated, the third one by Shyamal Kumar Sarker in "Tagore on Translation", *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, Vol. 43, Nos. 1-2, p. 70. For the fourth extract, see, Photocopy, RB.

10. See, Tagore to Thomas Sturge Moore, 11 June 1935, Photocopy, RB.
11. Roby Dutta, *Echoes from East and West* (Cambridge: Galloway and Porter, 1909). The book contains English translations of eleven poems and songs of Tagore.
12. The original letter in the holding of RB is dated 14 May, 1912.
13. Quoted in Sujit Mukherjee, *Passage to America: The Reception of Rabindranath Tagore in the United States, 1912-1941* (Calcutta: Bookland 1964), p. 120. See, also, Sujit Mukherjee, "Transcreating Translation", *Indian Literature* 180, 1997 ; pp. 158-67.
14. Translated by Kshitish Roy in *JJCL*, Vol. 9, pp. 123-25.
15. See, Bikash Chakravarty, "Tagore's Idea of Culture and the Arnoldian Context" in *Literature, Society and Ideology, in the Victorian Era*, ed. Jasodhara Bagchi (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers 1991), pp. 295-315.
16. *Op. cit.* p. 17.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 17-18.
18. *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980* (London 1981), p. 42.
19. Ernest Rhys to Rabindranath Tagore, 24 November 1913, RB.

THE TAGOREAN CONCEPT OF REALITY: MAN IN THE UNIVERSE

Sitansu Ray

I. THE TAGORE-EINSTEIN DIALOGUES: REALITY AND THE HUMAN WORLD, CAUSALITY AND CHANCE : A GIST AND A CRITIQUE

Rabindranath Tagore and Albert Einstein met several times. Two of their meetings, one in July and the other in August of 1930 in Germany, provide us with scholarly dialogues between them which are quite relevant to the pursuit of reality.

The first of the said encounters was held on July 14, 1930, at Einstein's residence in Kaputh, a short distance from Berlin. The topic of their discussion was mainly the nature of reality and its relationship to man. It is clear from the beginning of their conversation that neither Einstein nor Tagore believed in any kind of Divinity isolated from the world. But, with regard to reality and truth, while Tagore conceived of these as reflections of human consciousness, Einstein conceived of these as independent of humanity. Regarding beauty, they again thought almost alike, seeing beauty as a sense of value ascribed by man to truth.

The Tagorean contention¹ is that the infinite personality of man comprehends and subsumes the universe, and that is why the truth of the universe is human truth. This is not just a figment of poetic imagination. As solid matter is composed of protons and electrons with gaps among them, similarly humanity is composed of individuals, and these are interconnection of human relationship that gives solidarity to the human world. The central thought behind Tagore's literature, song, religion, etc. is that the entire universe is a human universe.

Einstein reacted by saying that there must be two concepts about the nature of the universe : One, the world seen as a unity dependent on humanity. Two, the world, from the physicist's point of view, as a reality independent of human aspect.

Tagore repudiated the second conception by asserting that there can be no other conception except the human one, for the scientific view itself is that of a human scientist. Tagore admitted the impersonal nature of science, which is not confined to individual limitations; yet that impersonal height, he avowed, is achieved through human wisdom. The individual gives way to what Tagore called the eternal man, the supreme man, the universal being, the universal mind, etc., not in any magical sense but in the spirit of the impersonal human world of truths. Here lies Tagore's sense of religion too. We achieve some standard of reason through our emotions and activities, our mistakes and blunders, our accumulated experiences, all through our illumined consciousness. So, in the Tagorean realization the domains of science, reason, religion, truth and beauty are not distant from one another. Pointing to the example of beauty, Tagore said that if there were no human beings any longer the Apollo and Belvedere would cease to be beautiful. Truth and beauty are akin to each other in the sense that both are realized by virtue of man's harmony with the universe of cosmos.

Einstein agreed with this concept of beauty, but not with this concept of truth. The Pythagorean theorem in geometry posits something independent of the existence of man. Reality is independent of man. Truth is relative to this reality. The negation of independent reality engenders negations of the existence of truth.

Tagore argued that the scientific truth which is to be reached through a process of logic is but a human act of thought. The *Brahman* or the Absolute Truth cannot be conceived by the individual mind or described by words but can be realized only by a complete merging with infinity. *Brahman* seems not to belong to science, which deals only with appearances, with what appears to be true to the human mind, with *māyā* or illusion.

Einstein commented that the said illusion must not be that of the individual alone but must be one of humanity as a whole. Hence, the dialogue became complex. Tagore said that in science we eliminate personal limitations and reach comprehension of the truth of what he called the universal mind. Einstein posed the problem: whether truth is independent of our consciousness.

Tagore now stated the whole thing in another way by suggesting that truth lies in the rational harmony between the subjective and objective aspects of reality, both of them belonging to super-personal man.

Einstein said that even in our everyday life we ascribe a reality independent of man to the objects we use. We thus connect our sense experiences in a reasonable way. For instance, that table remains in the house even when nobody is there. Of the same instance, Tagore said that the table as a solid object is an appearance; that what the human mind perceives as a table would not exist if that mind were naught. The ultimate physical reality of the table is nothing but "a multitude of separate revolving centres of electric forces"² belonging to the human mind. In apprehension of truth, there is an eternal conflict between the universal human mind and the same mind confined in an individual. This perpetual process of reconciliation is being carried on in our ethics too. Any truth absolutely unrelated to humanity must be absolutely non-existent. This is Tagore's assertion.

Tagore clarified one aspect of the concept of the universal mind, saying that the sequence of things does not reflect on it not in space, but only in time, like a sequence of notes in music. The concept of reality for such a mind is akin to musical reality, in which Pythagorean geometry can have no meaning. Tagore drew yet another interesting analogy. The so-called objective reality of paper is eaten up by the worm, but the truth and reality of literature is invaluable to the world of the human mind or the universal mind.

The Tagorean concept of religion centres on the realization of the universal human spirit in man's own individual being. This was the subject-matter of Tagore's Hibbert lectures of 1930, entitled *The Religion of Man*.

The next documented encounter between Tagore and Einstein took place on August 19, 1930, in Berlin³. The subject-matter of this encounter was a different facet of reality associated with causality and chance.

In the realm of infinitesimal atoms chance has its play. So the drama of existence cannot be absolutely predestined in character. This very mathematical conjecture attracted Tagore's attention. Tagore and

Dr. Mendel had discussed the matter. When Tagore raised the topic to Einstein, the contention of Einstein's reply was that the facts that make science tend towards this view, do not say good-bye to causality.

Both Tagore and Einstein observed and realized that the idea of causality is not to be found in the elements. Some other force builds, with various contingencies, this organized universe. The order of the universe is to be understood on a higher plane. In the minute elements the order is not perceptible. The order is there where the larger elements combine and guide existence.

Tagore then found a duality in the depths of existence, a contradiction between free impulse and directive will work upon the existence and evolution of the orderly scheme of things. Modern physics, according to Einstein, would not say that these are contradictory. A cloud appears to be one from a distance, but seen closely it shows itself to be a disordered assemblage of drops of water. Tagore then referred to the trans-disciplinary parallelism in human psychology: "Our passions and desires are unruly, but our character subdues them into a harmonious whole."⁴

Now, the question is whether similar things occur or not in the physical world. Sometimes some elements seem to be rebellious, having individual impulse. But, there is a principle in the overall physical world which dominates them and puts them into orderly organization. While Einstein inquired how it is that the elements can never be without statistical order, Tagore opined, without altogether contradicting the scientist, that the drama of existence is an ongoing harmony of chance and determinism, which makes existence eternally new and living. Tagore reaffirmed the point by citing the example of the psycho-ethical problem in human affairs—the problem of freedom and determinism. There is in human affairs an element of elasticity—some freedom within a small range—which elevates the expression of our personality.

Quite relevantly, Tagore instantly jumped to the parallel reference of the musical system of India, which is not so rigidly fixed as that of Western music. The composers give a certain definite outline, a system of melody and rhythmic arrangement, and within a certain limit the player or singer, i.e. the performer, can improvise on it. The performer must conform to the law of that particular melody, i.e., a *rāga*

or *rāgini*. Then only he can give extempore, spontaneous and free expression to his musical feeling within the prescribed regulations. The regulations are akin to causality and improvisations on the spur of the moment are akin to chance events.

The composer's genius is reflected in the creation of a foundation along the age-old tradition of the infra-structure and super-structure of melodies. But the performer inserts his own skill and artistry in the creation of variations with tonal flourish and ornamentation.

Similarly, if we do not cut ourselves adrift from the central law of existence, we can enjoy a satisfactory span of freedom within the limits of all constraints. If we can follow the law of goodness, in our conduct, we can exercise optimum liberty of self-expression. In our music too, especially in the Hindusthani classical music, there is a duality of freedom and order.

Einstein was further informed by Tagore and of our *Kīrtana* style, in which not only the melody but the words also are free to a certain extent. The *Kīrtana* singer is at liberty to add his own words by introducing parenthetical comments, extempore lyrico-tonal phrases (*ākhara* in *Kīrtana* terminology), not in the original song.

Regarding time, rhythm, and meter, Tagore informed Einstein, "In European music you have a comparative liberty about time, but not about melody. But in India we have freedom of melody with no freedom of time."⁵ This means that we have to maintain the full rotation of *tritāla*, *ekātāla*, *cautāla* or *dhāmāra* (or whatever rhythmic structure a particular composition may have) throughout the performance. Furthermore, we cannot deviate from the chosen tempo of a rhythm. The tempo and rhythm of Western music may rise and fall according to fluctuations in intensity of feeling.

Einstein further learnt from Tagore that some styles of Indian music are sung with syllables having no meaning, e.g., the *telenā* or what is called *tarānā* nowadays. The *ālāpa* is sung sometimes with meaningless syllables and sometimes with prolonged vowels (mainly *a*), with no words at all. The voice is used just like a musical instrument at that time. Only tonal beauty and not articulation matters then. Thus, Tagore explained that Indian vocal music can be free from any fixed semantic content so far as the *ālāpa* and *telenā* are concerned.

The main difference between Indian and Western music is that while Indian music is basically melodic in nature, Western classical music is based on counterpoint and harmony. Einstein said, "It seems that your melody is much richer in structure than ours."⁶ The fact is that the contrapuntal and harmonic structure of Western classical music is more or less predetermined and precomposed. There is some sort of mathematical exactness in the art of tonal score, harmonic setting and the array. That is why, there is no freedom in Western classical scores. Einstein said, "Sometimes the harmony swallows up the melody altogether."⁷ Despite absence of harmony, Indian music is richer in melody. We enjoy melodic freedom in Indian classical music. But we cannot deviate from the mathematical exactness of our *tāla* or rhythmic form. The main performer and the percussionist may create intra-beat subdivisions, but the total number of beats must remain the same.

Einstein's Theory of Relativity introduced the concept of time as the fourth dimension. To the non-scientists the fourth dimension serves as a metaphor for some intangible abstraction or some unforeseen chance-event leading us to a realm of novel experiences, towards liberation from the convention of spatial measures. Tagore conceived of an existence where "time rings as it does in music" and "the future is merely a prolonged present."⁸ Musical time leads us to the infinite.

For Tagore both science and arts are expressions of our spiritual nature that is above our biological requirements and possess an ultimate value. Regarding the difference of his outlook from that of Einstein, Tagore wrote afterwards, "I could readily see that Einstein believed my universe was limited by human conception, and he was convinced that there was some truth which was independent of human mind."⁹ This sort of independence proceeds to "transcendental materialism"¹⁰ which reaches the frontier of metaphysics, attributed to by utter detachment from the entangling world of self. Einstein held fast to the extra-human aspect of truth, while in Tagore's poetic realization the realm of truth had to be in human consciousness.

To come back to music again, though the art of music is surely based on strict acoustic science, both Tagore and Einstein faced the problem that it is very difficult to analyse the effect of Indian and Western music on our minds. The tonal and rhythmic structures along with all

their components can be analysed, but “what deeply affects the hearer is beyond himself.”¹¹ Einstein added, “The same uncertainty will always be there about everything fundamental in our experience, in our reaction to art, whether in Europe or in Asia. Even the red flower I see before me on your table may not be the same to you and me.”¹²

Tagore concluded: “And yet there is always going on the process of reconciliation between them, in the individual taste conforming to the universal standard.”¹³ The causal dialogues on serious topics ended with hyper-scholastic notes relevant to every branch of science and arts. Some region remains beyond our explanation, yet human endeavour in all branches of creativity and knowledge has always proceeded from the individual to the universal and come back to the individual in newer forms. This process of reciprocity is the foundation of man’s cultural realm.

So we see that the sidelights of the dialogues on reality including causality and chance, illuminate the ethico-psychological or rather psycho-ethical polarities of determinism and free impulse, and the Indian musician’s analogous freedom of creativity within the range of a determined set of rules.

Very recently a few physicists like Professor Prigogine and cosmologists like Sir Roger Penrose or Manilal Bhounik have come to realize that man’s consciousness cannot be separated from the space-time and mass-energy entities of reality as Tagore did.

II. VIŚVAPARICAY : INTRODUCTION TO THE COSMIC WORLD

Though meant for popular reading (*Lokasikṣa Granthamālā*, Visva-Bharati), Tagore’s *Viśvaparikay*¹⁴ reflects his scientific bent of mind and his acquaintance with the upto date scientific works of the East and till then.

Objectively, *Viśvaparikay* deals with a span ranging from the mystery of infinitesimal particles to the amazement of the vastness of the realm of star including the solar system and last but not the least, the wonder of evolution of life, mind and human wisdom on earth. Tagore dedicated the book to no less a person than the celebrated scientist

Professor Satyendranath Basu. Bibhutibhushan Sen, the then Professor of mathematics at Krishnanagar Government College, had checked Tagore's manuscript with necessary scrutiny and corrections.

We see in *Viśvaparikā* that Tagore depicts the reality of the terrestrial world as objectively as possible without any kind of fictional fancy. Yet he firmly states that omnicomprehensiveness of the Absolute Reality (*Bhūmā*) may be possible only in human consciousness, not in outward space-time entity of mass.

Life may be a property of matter, it may be a purely geological fact of the transitory biosphere of the earth. Individual human life may be too short to have full epistemological grasp of the reality in all its span and depth. Yet, it cannot be denied that human soul is the final outcome of the universe upto its present stage of evolution. Despite all risks of falsity of our mental work, our soul remains a part and parcel of the whole creation. If the whole can be realized at all, it may be possible only by dint of our soulful meditation¹⁵ in the right way. Aryan sages had done so.

The source of life from the inanimate objects lies in required supply of radiance, mainly from the sun. Our *Gāyatrī Mantra* admits that all the heavenly bodies and even the stream of our consciousness and intellect have been emerging from the omnipotent source of radiance.

So, through scientific, aesthetic and spiritual pursuits, man can realize the fact that man is not just a man, he is in every moment a man-in-the-Universe, not as a passive component, but as an active participant.

III. TAGORE'S CONGREGATIONAL LECTURES : QUEST FOR ETHICO-SPIRITUAL REALITY ¹⁶

These lectures, more than one hundred and fifty in number, are never like priestly sermons, but reveal in lucid style the ethico-spiritual reality of the creation. Tagore never imposed uncritical credulity to his listeners, rather made them realize the preciousness of love, beauty, truth and infinity—all contained within reality.

The very first lecture "*utīṣṭhata jagrata*" (rise, awake) is that of awakening the human soul, of bringing out human spirit from the usual matter-of-fact chores and lifting it to the higher level of the reality of consciousness.

The lecture "*Sāṃsay*" (doubt) asserts that doubt is much better than insensitivity and inactivity, resulting from injudicious belief. Pangs arising out of doubt evokes our mind and spirit. This is true in both ordinary and academic senses. Doubtfulness is the starting point, the stepping stone of philosophy. So, it can lead us to the realization of reality. But, incapacity for getting stirred up, ignorance of ignorance, being inactively confined to just animality, passive submission to our loss of action, absence of reaction are miserable and insurmountable hindrances to realization. Contrarily, pains of doubt and weary search for a ray of light in the midst of darkness of ignorance are far better than passiveness of mind. Apart from this, love is a precious wealth of human heart. Love removes inactivity and inspires mind towards the greater goal of adjustment and union. By virtue of love human soul can merge into the all-pervading cosmic soul. We may be in claims in our day-to-day livelihood, but we are emancipated in the realm of love.

"*Ātmār Drsti*" (vision of the soul), "*Pāpa*" (sin) "*Duḥkha*" (sorrow), "*Tyāga*" (sacrifice), "*Prema*" (love), "*Bīrodher Sāmañjasya*" (harmony between contradictions) and "*Ki Cāi*" (what do we want)—all these lectures were consecutively delivered in the last week of Agrahāyaṇa in 1315 B.S. The purport of these lectures points to the fact that only objects of sense-perceptions are given to use, but the reality has to be understood through our soul. In the long run self-identity does not remain in seclusion but becomes identified with all objects as a matter of destined communion with all souls called *Bhūmā*. Sin is caused from self-confinement, which can be broken by love. Joy, combined with pains, can lead to proper self-realization. Creation is never perfect. We are bound to face and accept some sorts of oddities and unwelcome phenomena. Both bliss and curse, gains and losses form the core of our life. To cope with them, human life develops centripetal and centrifugal forces of our psyche. Balance or harmony is developed through proportionate acceptance and rejection. As our digestive system assimilates just the necessary vitamins of our food intake and rejects

the improper elements through the act of evacuation in our organism, so also our life must assimilate the essential values and eliminate the oddities.

Cultivation of non-attachment as opposed to infatuation can lead our soul to liberation from bondage. Tagore refers to the *Gītā* wherefrom we learn that union through work (*karmayoga*) is possible through disinterested performance of work. But, while the *Gītā* insists on severe dutifulness, Tagore glorifies love which generates work. Where wisdom and reasoning fail, it is love which wins. Love can unite the opposites. Sacrifice (*tyāga*) and gain become identical in the case of love.

Tagore's month-long series of congregational addresses delivered during Poush 2-29, 1315 B.S. cover a wide range of ethico-spiritual discourses. "*Prārthanā*" (prayer) refers to Maitreyi's ideal, who chose to accompany her husband Yājñavalkya at *Vāṇaprastha* (resorting to the forest for higher thinking) instead of enjoying material wealth at home. If the husband-wife relationship is confined to self-seeking material comfort and sensual pleasures alone, it will divert them away from the blissful Prakṛti-Puruṣa relationship. It will be fatal for us like cutting a tree for collecting its fruits and flowers. Real love like that of Maitreyi's is adorned with *Śrī* (beauty), *Hr* : (modesty) and *Dhī* (intellect and wisdom).

The lectures "*Dekhā*" (visual perception) and "*Śomā*" (auditory perception), relating to the two basic senses are unique exposition of immediate and in-depth functions of our senses of vision and audition. (See section VI of this paper).

The lecture, entitled "*Mānusa*" (man) in the context of the Poush-festival at Santiniketan, is more closely related to the phenomenology of man's life. Man has his own consciousness, own independent ego, by means of which he thinks himself separated from the whole creation even though he is the part and parcel of it. By virtue of his creative will, he is continuously striving for his own assertion in the creation. But, his fulfilment lies in striking harmony between differences, unity among variety.

Two complementary lectures "*Dina*" (day) and "*Rātri*" (night) deal with the dialectics of light and darkness and their effects on human consciousness. Subsequently comes dialectics of our conscious and

sleeping states of mind, active mood and resignation or repose. Our embodied soul takes rest in the Supreme Soul, as it were during sleep.

The lecture "*Ichā*" (will) is the exposition of a wonderful facet of the reality of human life. Will attains freedom, when it merges with others will, not by estranging itself from others. In the lecture "*Basana-Ichā-Mangala*" (desire, will, goodness) psycho-ethical reality is perceived. While desires are directed outwards, will tends towards inner self, evoking our *Rājāsika* (royal) traits. *Rājāsika* traits indulge in luxury and lavishness. It is *Maṅgala* (goodness) only which can safeguard a man from the strains of desire and will. "*Tintalā*", denoting to three levels of our mind, deals first with our unrestrained natural traits, secondly with our balanced religious traits and finally with the tranquil spiritual state of mind of those of us who can achieve it.

Truth resides in orderly, joyful and beauteous aspects of reality ; and that is the theme of the lecture "*Saundarya*" (beauty). The reality of the Absolute Brahman is not only truthful but also joyful in His manifestations as exposed in the Vedic phrase *Aṇandarūpamamṛtam yadvibhāti* (all the forms of creation are His joyful expositions).

The lecture "*Prāṇa*" (life) explains identity between life and the Absolute Brahman, who is expressing Himself like music emerging out from the sitar. The body of the sitar is just a matter. The player gives it life by virtue of music. Similarly, Brahman pours life into flora and fauna. Human life is more precious since man can realize Him. It is true that man and only man sings and make music. Though Satan comes to jeopardize every good thing, man survives with all his divine qualities. After all man is *Amṛter Putra* (the son of the deathless). We are the dwellers of this heavenly earth and not terminated by death. Man has no other way but to know Him, whose light is coming to us piercing the darkness of death.

IV. THE LITERARY CONCEPT OF REALITY

In a long letter to Amiya Chakravarti¹⁷, Tagore pronounced that science is there for knowing the objective aspects of creation, contrarily literary reality or rather poetic reality is closely associated with human affection.

Literary creativity and enjoyment belong to the subjective world of man, a newer kind of reality akin to truth and beauty. That means, literary reality may belong to pure imagination, which may not have factual or eventual validity. Facts may take their place in newspaper report. But mere facts devoid of artistic value cannot belong to the literary domain. The value-essence of select facts, charged with emotional and imaginative vision, or pure imagination responded to by the *Sahṛdaya* (a person having sensitive heart and training) or *Rasika* (one who enjoys sentiments) form the core reality of literature. What is awkward and ugly may be turned into literary beauty. Examples may be drawn from both eastern and western literatures.

Enjoyment does not necessarily mean enjoyment of cosy and happy incidents. Tragic pain, which is unwelcome in real life, forms moving scenes in the theatre. Tragedy involves the spectator or the reader with more emotional involvement. Intense tragic pain illumines our spirit through literature. In Tagorean concept, *Ānanda* (blissful joy) incorporates both joy and pain; while just pleasure is shallow in nature and quite far from real *Ānanda*.

The very first essay of *Sāhityer Pathe*, "Bāstav" (the real)¹⁸ highlights in many ways the Tagorean concept of literary reality. Actually, Tagore had faced virulent criticism from some corners that he is extra-romantic and his literature is devoid of reality. The essay "Bastav" is a rejoinder denying those jealous charges and establishing the highest ideal of reality in literature.

Reality as manifest in literature is directly related to *Rasa* or aesthetic enjoyment. (*Rasa* is not identical with the set of nine-*rasa* theory of the Sanskrit rhetoricians.) *Rasa* rests on and responds to only the *Rasika* and not to the mass. Mass popularity, philanthropy, social reform cannot be the aim of literature. Kalidasa did not write for the peasant community of Ujjayini. The reality of literature tends to be eternal and universal. It cannot be confined to the contemporary national traits either. The seat of Sarasvati is on the lotus, a metaphor of timeless beauty. She cannot be seated on the contemporary issues and popular taste, confined to gross sex-instinct on the one hand and arrogance of poverty on the other. Readymade curry power¹⁹ of perverted sense of reality exploits these two things for achieving cheap popularity.

V. THE TAGOREAN CONCEPT OF "ĀMI": MAN IN THE UNIVERSE

The poem "*Āmi*"²⁰ (I) was written by Tagore on May 29, 1936 and was included in his poetical work *Śyāmalī*. *Śyāmalī* is the feminine form of *Śyāmalā*, which means green. Tagore used the word *Śyāmalī* as a proper noun to name not only this poetical work but also the mud-house he lived in from time to time in his old age. "*Śyāmalī*"²¹ is also the title of the concluding poem of the collection. The poem was composed on August 6, 1936 and is most affectionately associated with the earthen house.

"*Āmi*" is the first person singular form of personal pronoun in Bengali. Transcending its usual day to day use, that very *Āmi* is the principal instrument of epistemology, the main laboratory of existentialism, the boundless span of phenomenology, the only agent of scientific objectivity and obviously the sole repository of aesthetic reality. The poem "*Āmi*" is one of the best poetical expositions of the reality of human mind. Conversely, the reality of the human mind finds its best integrated yet concise poetical manifestation in the poem "*Āmi*".

Quite metaphorically, viz., using the rhetorical expression of transferred epithet, Tagore affirms his sense of reality that emerald itself is not green, ruby itself cannot be red, unless it is tinged by man's consciousness which perceives a piece of emerald as green, a piece of ruby as red. It is not the sun alone, but it is man's visual perception, which illumines the sky. The rose is beautiful only because man perceives it as beautiful.

If the whole idea be criticised as a stern philosophical doctrine and quite unbecoming of poetry, Tagore's answer would be : it is the essence of reality and that is why it is poetry. Philosophy and poetry are not opposed to each other. They are complementary and very often close to each other. Tagore is proud of realizing this reality. But, his pride should not be taken as self-centered fancifulness. He is proud on behalf of each and every man, or rather, on behalf of the whole mankind.

Man is not a passive component of creation. He himself is the master of all sorts of creativity including the hues of precious stone, the lustre

of the sky, and the beauty of the rose. That is why, the poem records his self-confident assertion :

“Āmāri cetanār raṅge pānnā holo sabuj.
Cuni uṭhlo rāṅgā hoye.
Āmi cokh mellum ākāśe,
Juale uṭhlo ālo
Pūbe paścime.
Golāper dike ceye ballum “sundar”.
Sundar holo se.”²²

This very beginning of the free-verse makes clear his observations on the reality of man's positive self-esteem.

In keeping with nihilistic fashion the ontologist may say that there is no emerald, no ruby, no light, no rose, and even no “I” and no “you”. On the other hand, the Infinite Omnipresent has always been endeavouring to know himself through the finite reality of man's self. That very reality of man's entity of apparent finitude is called “Āmi”, the replica of the Infinite and Absolute Brahman as it were. In the depth of *Āmi*, i.e., myself, light and shade get balanced, forms emerge enlivened with feelings. All the so-called theoretical negations turn into a vital affirmation by virtue of an illusive magic of lines and colours combined with delight and pain.

Man has the brush and colour in his artistic hands. He composes, draws and paints the world anew. Moreover, he has combined with his sense of beauty, the most precious wealth of his / her heart, and that is love.

Suppose, a total annihilation takes place by means of a universal cataclysm, natural or man-made; suppose, there is no trace of human civilization or human being any more, matter and energy will remain in some form or other in the solar system ; but there will be no feeling, no sense of beauty, no love. There will be nobody to say :

“You are beautiful,
I love you.”

If that stage should really come, the Creator will have to sit again for one more age long *Sādhana* for the renewal of man, because it is only man who will utter :

"You are beautiful,
I love you."

The illuminating, dynamic and loving nature of man's self makes him greater even than his Creator, the Master of all matter, cosmic energy, and life.

There is another Tagore poem bearing the title "*Āmi*",²³ one composed on February 11, 1931. This poem is included in the poetical work entitled *Parishes* (The End). The poem reflects man's self-interpretation in existence. There the poet is of the view that the inner "I" within myself is the vital source of all my words, movements, music, and all manner of creativity. The first-hand understanding of my own self may suggest that I am the be-all and end-all of my own self. But in reality, that "I" extends beyond myself. That is why, I know myself better when I recollect the memory of my beloved, when I identify myself with the heroes of history and the mythology I read. Very often the inner "I" is overshadowed by my constant daily chores. But in reality the realm of my inner self transcends my matter-of-fact living. My inner "I" is omnipresent in the past, present and future. "I" can move everywhere at any moment. My apparent "I" perceives that inner "I".

One more poem with the same title "*Āmi*"²⁴ is there in the addenda to the collection of poems titled *Śeṣ Saptak* (i.e., the last octave), published in 1935. The central idea of the poem is the delight of the poet's realization of his own existence: "*Āchi āchi ei ye āmi āchi*". This means, how fine it is that I am present, whether in the midst of my natural and social surroundings or in the midst of the vast extra-terrestrial world.

In various prose writings also, this basic philosophy of the human self is the key-note. One such is the essay "*Āmār Jagat*"²⁵ (my world) in the book *Sañcay* (accumulations). Here Tagore wants to establish the truth that the world is not merely the play of radio-activity, it is after all mine, my own creation. This is the basic claim of what may be designated as the core of reality, eminent as my consciousness. This emanent reality is the generating ground of science, philosophy, literature, music, the arts and all the realms of intellectual and aesthetic creativity.

VI. ORCHESTRATION OF THE UNIVERSE : REFLECTIONS IN TAGORE'S CREATIVITY / SONGS

The uniquely metaphorical phrase "*bipūla viśva-gāner banyā*"²⁶ occurs in Tagore's congregational address "*Śonā*" (auditory perception).²⁷ The deluge of magnimous orchestration of the universe is so much a vital metaphor that he can affirm in full faith :

This is neither a poetic utterance nor a rhetorical phrase, throughout space and time a continuous orchestration is being reverberated in grand fulness²⁸.

Tagore's enjoyment of life and the creations as expressed in musical and aesthetic terms throughout his creative life is the subject-matter of this discourse. Orchestration of the universe is reflected in the orchestration of the arts corresponding to synesthetic inter-relationship of sound, image, colour, fragrance, movement, gesture, rhythm, word, passion, love and various other facts and attributes of the creation as comprehended in human life. As obviously seen, by virtue of transferred epithet or rather transcended epithet, the expansive sense of orchestration here transcends the factual orchestral performance of a conservatory or a symphony group.

It will not be out of place to mention that "*Śonā*" is preceded by its significant and complementary counterpart "*Dekha*"²⁹ (visual perception), which is the theme of just the previous congregational address by Tagore. In "*Dekhā*", Tagore's wonder in perceiving the ever-spreading light and ever-evolving forms is revealed. "*Rūper jhamā*"³⁰ (the spring of beauty) arising from the ultimately submerging into "*ananta nīpasāgar*"³¹ (the infinite ocean of beauty) is the theme of this address.

But the realm of beauty is not mute. It is sonorous. In emotional ecstacy Tagore records his realization :

"As this devastating deluge of magnanimous music of the universe rushes towards our soul, our single sense-organ is insufficient to receive it; we have to open up all our senses. We receive this musical flow through our eyes, ears, sense of touch and by all means of our body and spirit. We, as it were, see this grand harmonious concert, listen to it, touch it, smell it and even taste it."³²

Tagore mentions his own song “*Bāje bāje ramya vīnā*”³³ at the outset of his congregational address “*Sona*”. In this three-stanza song, the very first stanza narrates the delightful play of *vīnā* as it were throughout the natural surroundings around us such as, in the beautiful lotus, in the moonlit night, in the dark cloudy sky, in the fragrance of flowers. The second stanza narrates the orchestric aspects of the sun and the stars, the rivers and the oceans, the rhythmic emergence and extinction of life, the rhythmic flow or arenas. The third stanza depicts the delightful embellishments of the blue sky, the beauty of dawn and dusk, of the colourful earthly dust, of the devoted souls of the rich and the poor. Orchestration with dancing and embellishment of everything in the universe is surcharged with passionate love (*preme preme bāje/nāche/sāje*).

All the geneses of Tagore’s creative writings including his songs and dramas abound in musical terminologies and orchestrational metaphors. These metaphors are vibrating, as it were, with tonal and rhythmic components.

ORCHESTRATION IN THE MACRO LEVEL OR SPACE-TIME : SIGNIFICANCE OF OMKĀRA

Tagore, well-versed in the Vedic hymns, realized the significant *O...m* on the steady and prolonged tone before starting and after completing a hymn. This *Omkāra*, the sonic contemplation of the ever-evolving Universe, is the music of the boundless infinitude as Tagore says.³⁴ *Om* synchronizes *Rk* and *Sāma*, word and tune, truth and life. *Om* is the tonal affirmation of vibrating life within the mass and energy of the Universe.

Tagore values *Om* for its musico-spiritual effect rather than for any mystery or mysticism in it. He says that when a piece of music ends, it does not create a nihilistic darkness of silence ; rather it is merged into and unified with *Om*, the vibrating spirit of the space-time entity of the Universe³⁵. *Om* right down from the aeon of the Aryan sages, is the tonal metaphor of the whole gamut of cosmic feeling. In a specific section of the book *Chanda*³⁶ (rhythm), Tagore writes that the tonal effect

of the hymns rather than their semantic field leads our spirit to the infinite *Brahman*".

Let us take into account the observation of other writers. *The Pelican History of Music* records:

"Thus it is that the *Ragas*, like the *mantras* or sacred formulas, are regarded as aspects of and hence as approaches to *Savdabrahman*, that is, the Absolute (Brahman) conceived as sound".

The Oxford History of Music says about *Om*:

"In the advanced culture of India the syllable *Om* (arrow) (which is pitched very high in the *udghitha* song) is the nail which pierces the whole world and holds it together."³⁸

The continuous tonic drone of the *tānpurā* or *tāmburā* is absolutely akin to *Om*. Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy says:

"We have here the sound of the tambura which is heard before the song, during the song, and continues after it. That is the timeless Absolute, which as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. On the other hand there is the song itself which is the variety of Nature, emerging from its source and returning at the close of its cycle."³⁹

MAN IN THE UNIVERSE

Grasp of the time-space vastness including innumerable luminaries is almost impossible. The advance of modern space-technology has led man only upto the moon, the nearest heavenly body of ours. Man is just a tiny creature within the vastness of time-space. Human knowledge and civilization, which have made man much greater than other creatures, are quite negligible and transitory in the unbounded arena of time-space.

Yet it may be taken for granted that human consciousness is the only vital sense organ of the universe. Otherwise, the universe is nothing more than an intimate play of inanimate mass and energy, unconscious physical law of radio activity and quantum mechanics. So, though apparently negligible, man is great indeed, not as a discrete being, but as a unique phenomenon in the course of the evolution of the universe.

The universe can know itself through man's self only. Herein lies Tagore's winning point in the Tagore-Einstein dialogues⁴⁰. Man is unique in the sense that he can at least conceive of the wonder of the creation, he can appreciate and create beauty, mankind is the vital repository of wisdom and love.

Now, musical tone is the sonic paradigm of the universe including man's realization of love and wonder. All other arts and crafts supplement towards the wholeness of man's creativity. Hence, orchestration of the arts brings forth the macro level time-space eternity into man's realization. The temple-tops suggest the unending height of spatial dimensions, sculptures recreate the tangible model of the cosmos, pictures and paintings represent the visual charms as comprehended by the artist; literature and the theatre create a parallel illusion of man's involvement in his world. Music, being the ethereal wealth of man's tonal creativity, is far above any earthly representation. Music is the *Nāda-Brahman*, the infinite Brahman conceived in tonal entity. Seen from the opposite perspective, Tagore declares that through music, i.e., our music, the creation expresses itself.

*"Prakāśa-piṇḍāṣi dharitṛi bane bane
Śudhāye phirila sur khuñje pābe kabe"⁴¹.*

(Expression-hungry earth named about in forests asking when would it find the music.)

COLOURFUL SKY CORRESPONDING TO THE IMAGERY OF TUNEFUL ORCHESTRATION :

Tagore often reacts to the rising and setting sun, and his reaction is musical. Besides his numerous songs on dawn and dusk, he describes his musical reactions in his works. Let us take the very first one in the book of poems *Patraput*. The venue is the mountain-top of Darjeeling. The time is sunset. All the jubilant tourists are silently enjoying the colourfulness of the western sky along the terrain below. The esraj with them for pastime music is laid silent on the ground. All on a sudden the poet turns back and as if by chance it turns to be a

full moon day, the rising full moon in the eastern horizon comes to his sight with all amazement. The unforeseen conglomeration of the golden west and the silvery east is depicted as a marvellous musical imagery in the concluding part of the poem.

"The artiste plays *ālāpa* (melodic improvisation) on his *vīṇā* everyday. On that fine day, when there is no bustle in the whole environment, a chance-phenomenon occurs—that is the harmonizing orchestration of the tunes of the gold string and the silver string.

The next moment the sublime orchestra submerges into ultimate silence. The player's instrument bursts out into melting ecstasy as it were.

An unexpected human witness to this phenomenon, I exclaim :
"Wonderful !"⁴²

Examples are many. To be selective, let me mention only the colourful operatic play of the sky and the sea as described by Tagore in *Jāpānyātri* (the voyager to Japan). He enjoys the abundance of the moving forms and colours of the clouds of the sky as well as those of the waves of the rolling sea especially during the sunrise and the sunset. The whole experience is imaged as a dynamic music and dance show.⁴³

As the Maharaja's guest at Natore, Tagore took an afternoon stroll along an open terrain road and wrote afterwards an intimate letter to his niece Indira Debi describing his experience :

"Over the utter silence all around, what a deep calm and heartening tune resounds everywhere from the earth to the realm of stars! It is exactly what is actually happening. The cosmic vibration which stimulates our eyes is light and that which strikes our ear is sound. If we concentrate, we can translate the enormous harmony of all the light and colour of the universe into a grand symphonic orchestra."⁴⁴

This is the essence of what is called synaesthesia, i.e., the relationship among senses, in psychological researches.

MICRO LEVEL ORCHESTRATION IN HUMAN BODY-MIND

The mystery behind profuse use of musical terminologies in describing psychological actions and reactions lies in the otherwise inexplicable

relational aspects behind transferred epithets. I mean, musical epithets are transferred in the description of body-mind phenomena. Far from being arbitrary, these uses are quite natural to a sensitive mind. We cannot but associate our emotional faculties with the serene joy of enjoying music. Let me furnish examples.

The hero of the short story *Aparicitā* (the stranger woman) identifies the appearance and voice of Kalyani with music. Her gentle utterance "gārdite jāygā ache"⁴⁵ (there is room in this compartment of the train) resonates continuously in the hero's mind like the refrain of a song and the rhythmic sound of the running train is felt by him like the accompaniment of *mrdaiga* (a percussion), made of iron as it were. Next morning, at a junction station, he sees her and feels that her bodily form has assumed a musical charm.

Now, how can music be a paradigm of speech and beauty of Kalyani? What is the common factor between the sweat charm of the woman and the musical tune? Therein lies the mystery of the intricate phenomena of human life, mind and consciousness—all seated in the microcosm of the cells of human body.

The imagination of tactile sensation creates the unique imagery of orchestration. The following is an approximation of just a few lines of the poem "*Mānasa-Sundari*" (i.e. the beauty born of imagination) from *Sonār Tarī* (the golden boat) :

"O my beloved, I listen to the inner mystery of yours while in close embrace with you. Like your fingering, your heartbeats strike the strings of my heart and raise the waves of music. ... I myself shall vibrate with the tuneful ripples."⁴⁶

Microcosmic orchestration spreads throughout the macrocosmic span in the following lines from "*Jyotsnā-Rātre*" (in the moonlit night) of the poetic work *Citra* :

"Shiver my person with the memory of thy embrace. Let my nerves and veins resonate with the orchestration of the infinite. Let my heart burst into an ecstatic joy and spread over the space like the flow of tune."⁴⁷

Tactile, visionary and auditory imageries are juxtaposed or rather fused together. Very often our organic body is compared to a *vīṇā*. Besides

the main strings, there are so many strings for resonance and overtones in a *vīṇā*. Similarly our body consists of a very complex yet sensitive nervous system. Our sensation are epithetically transferred to orchestra tunes. Parallely our heartbeats and pulsations are juxtaposed with orchestral rhythms. Affectionate or passionate tactile sensation generates musical sensation. In his song "*Āmare karo tomāra vīṇā*", Tagore says:

"Do make me your *vina*, take hold of me and let my strings resonate with your lovely flowers"⁴⁸

In the poem "*Dhvanī*" (sound) from *Ākāś' Pradīp* (sky-lamp), Tagore recollects his childhood sensitivity towards soundscape:

"I was born with my psychic strings actuely tuned. Sounds produced all around had had their vibrations and resonances encircling my delicate nervous system"⁴⁹.

In two letters written to his niece Indira Debi, Tagore records his inner musical response and reaction :

"I am like a vital piano with a number of strings with mechanistic intricacies inside its darkness. I don't know who plays it and when. It is very difficult to understand fully why it is played. I understand only what is being played—whether the tunes are of pleasure or pain, whether the tones are sharp or flat, whether the pieces are rhythmic or non-rhythmic. I know further the lower and the upper ranges of my octaves. No, do I even know that properly? I am further puzzled whether I myself am a sympathetic grand piano or a cottage piano"⁵⁰.

"I was tuning a new song of mine. The tune is not very new. It is like a *Kirtan* based on *Bhairavī*. Yet, while singing with rhythm, the whole blood circulation of my body is engrossed in music as it were. The whole of my body and mind is being vibrated like a musical instrument. The waves of that music spreads out from my body and mind towards the whole outer world. Thus an orchestrational harmony is taking place between my soul and the Universe. When a *vina* is being played, its strings look blurred; likewise, through musical tune the whole world seems misty and vibrating as it were."⁵¹

The above examples make it clear that the microcosm and the macrocosm are woven together by virtue of human consciousness,

perpetually creating a harmonized orchestration, as it were, in every significant phenomenon.

THE IMAGERY OF *NAṬARĀJA* IN TAGORE'S SONGS AND POEMS

Naṭarāja is the mythical King-God of music and dance. The universe is conceived as a grand theatre and *Naṭarāja*, its conductor. On this theme Tagore composed his famous song "*Nṛtyera tāle tāle, Naṭarāja, ghucāo ghucāo ghucāo sakala bandha he*"⁵² (remove all my fetters through the rhythms of the unbounded span of tunes of your dance music). The gist of the remaining portion is as follows:

"The cosmic ripples are created by your dance steps. Sarasvatī's (Goddess of dancing and music) shoreless lake is full of those ripples. The lotus of Sarasvatī's lake is emitting divine fragrance. ...

"Your liberated movement is revealed in your dance, all of your illusions are reflected in your cosmic dance. The whole universe as well as the infinitesimal atoms spell your dance-movements. ...

"Rebellious atoms get beautifully regulated at the spell of your dance. The sun, the moon and other luminaries orchestrate with the luminous anklets jingling around your feet.

"The cosmic consciousness is due to the life-force of your dance. Your ecstatic joy brings forth cycles of pain and pleasure into a balance through infinite times by virtue of tune and rhythm.

"Through your evolutionary dance, I (the human being) have come into the realm of your orchestric whirl. O, the hermit; o the beautiful, o the pacifier, o the awful! with your ageless orchestration and dance you carry on the rotation of life and death. I bow down to thee. Let the immeasurable wealth of your dance be poured into my psyche".

Tagore's concept of *Naṭarāja*, therefore, is quite removed from that of the conventional *Śiva*. *Naṭarāja* is the cosmic embodiment of the core of astronomy, cosmology, physical science, religion, music and dance and man's psychic realm as well.

There are various other songs too depicting other aspects of *Naṭarāja* such as *pralay nācan nācleyakhan*⁵³ (when you perform the dance of

annihilation, your matted lock is loosened causing the release of the musical stream of *Jāhnavī*), *kaler mandirā ye sadāi bāje* (the cymbals of aeon play for ever).

Tagore's play *Natarāja - Riturangasālā*⁵⁶ (*Natarāja* and the pageant of seasons) depicts the colourful ethos of the cycle of six seasons. In its preface Tagore mentions that man's liberation lies in realizing that the evolution of creation in the outer space and the evocation of *rasa* (sentiments) in man's inner self--both epitomized by the dance of *Natarāja*.

THE IMAGERY OF THE FLUTE PLAYER BUCOLIC GOD

Tagore elevates the flute player bucolic god's imagery from the conventional Krishna-cult to the astronomical vastness. The boundless space is visualized as the pastoral ground of Vrindavana. The sun and all the stars and planets are compared with the cattle. All are grazing of their own since the *Rākhāl*, the bucolic God, is playing his flute somewhere beyond the space-time vastness. This is the metaphoric theme of Tagore's song "*ei to tomār ālokdhenu*"⁵⁷ (these are your luminous cattle). In the last portion of the song the whole metaphor is transferred to the human mental plane, wherein our hopes and desires are concentrated. The God of the universe is also "*mor jīvaner Rākhāl*"⁵⁸ (the mentor of my life). It is prayed that with His flute-music He would tend our desires and longings into His shelter at the day-break.

Krishna has yet another identity. With the tune of His flute, He attracts His lover Radha and Radha's *sakhīs* (confidante damsels). In Tagorean aesthetics Krishna represents the eternal masculine, Radha the eternal feminine, and the tune of Krishna's flute becomes the symbol of intense love-attraction between man and woman. The love-song "*Sakhi, oi bujhi bāñśi bāje; banamājhe ki manomājhe*"⁵⁹ (O, sakhi! listen to the flute-music, I wonder whether it sounds in the grove or in my mind) in the words of Radha signifies romantic pangs of love associated with the flute music. Such another song is entitled "Call of the flute", which is "*Mari lo mari; āmāy bāñśite dekeche ke*"⁶⁰ (I feel helpless, I am called by the flute).

UNFOLDING OF THE METAPHORS

Natarāja and Lord Krishna may be exclusive properties of the Hindu culture, but the idea of music of the sphere is very much common to both Indian and Western cultures.

Just two decades ago newer researches were undertaken and carried on under the auspices of UNESCO in the field of sound-scape. All the sonic properties of the universe were examined with acute seismographic minuteness and lastly it was inferred that :

“... the universe is held together by the harmonies of some precise acoustic design, serene and mathematical.”⁶¹

From some properties of the environment, man's perception rises up to the level of silent spheres. The luminaries have been associated with the realm of orchestration from the time of Pythagoras.

Some sort of explanation to it has been provided by Tagore in his *Śavda-Tattva* (principles of phonetics), *Pañca-bhūta* (five elements) and in various other works. In *Śavda-Tattva* Tagore refers to the mystery of the usage of adjectives and adverbs of sound (including onomatopoeic words) even when there is no sound at all⁶². As for example, the word 'loud' is an adjective of sound, but we say very often 'loud colour'. Actually all our five senses are subtly interlinked with one another in our psyche. This very inter-relationship has been termed synesthesia by the psychologists. We say 'tone of a picture' to indicate its balance of lines, colours, and light-and-shade. To express physical pain we say 'cutting pain', 'gnawing pain', 'tearing pain' or 'bursting pain'—all bearing adjectives attributed to sound. Reversely, sound is also sometimes attributed to the adjectives associated with our sense of vision. As for example, a good music illuminates the whole atmosphere along with our soul. Thus light and sound have a mutual agreement with each other. Gustation sensation also joins hand as we say 'sweet tune'. We have already seen that tactile sensation is expressed in musical terms. We very often say 'soft colour' and 'soft tune'. Olfactory sense also does not stay apart since in Tagore-songs we come across expressions like “*saṅgītasaurabh*”⁶³, i.e., musical fragrance.

In *Pañcabhuta* too Tagore explains that the emotional faculty of human mind is keenly sensitive to all the objects of light, colour, sound, etc. There is latent but powerful effect of the vibrations of light, heat and sound on the sympathetic vibrations of our nervous system. Simultaneous effect of speed is also there. The sun, the moon and all the stars and planets are rotating in their respective orbits. The grand phenomena of their movement and light gave birth to the idea of music of the luminaries among ancient Greek thinkers. In such a teleological yet lucid narration Tagore infers "*Jyotiṣkamaṇḍalīr Saṅgī*"⁶⁴ (music of the luminaries).

In *Alocana* (discussion) Tagore quotes from an English poet :

"There's not the smallest orb which thou beholdest
But in this motion like an angel sings."⁶⁵

and justifies the poet's intuition at par with the scientific and philosophical truth. Actually simile and metaphor are based on some obvious truth relevant to human consciousness. Music is not kept in closed-door milieu, it is inseparably associated with other aspects of being.

Tagore sings in his *Pūja* (devotional) song "*Preme prāṇe gāne gandhe*"⁶⁶:

Overflowing the earth and the universe
your nectar is being showered in love,
life, music, fragrance, light and joy."

Orchestration of the universe arouses a sense of musical value ascribed to the creation. Unfolding of the metaphor generates more and more metaphors. The span of our understanding extends and the depth of our realization plunges into greater depths. In another *Pūja* song Tagore sings :

Tumi nava nava rūpe eso prāṇe
*Eso gandhe barāṇe eso gane!*⁶⁷
(Do come into my life in new and newer forms.
Do come in fragrance, in colours and in tunes.)

Another *Puja* number "*Jagate anandayajñe*"⁶⁸ wherein we come across a heartfelt contentment of the composer as he sings :

"My human life is gratified as I have been invited in this pompous ceremony of the universe. My vision roams to my heart's content in the realm of the beautiful and my listening is absorbed in the depth of tunefulness.

"You have entrusted me with playing the flute and I sing songs of pains and pleasures of life. Before I depart, I offer my thankful ovation to you."

SOME MORE SONGS ON MUSIC OF THE UNIVERSE

It is interesting to notice that quite a number of consecutive songs (from the beginning) of the devotional and love sections *Gitavitan* are on music, both human and cosmic. The very first song in the section on nature is on the orchestration of the natural world around us. The first seven songs of *Vicitra* (mixed feelings) are those on dancing. Apart from these, there are various other songs on music and dance scattered over all the categories of *Gitavitan*. This is because music and dance are at the root of our spiritual and carnal life, our close relationship with nature, our inmost feelings and thoughts. In this way music and dance become the bridge between the human life-world and the endless universe surrounding our life and being.

In many of Tagore's devotional songs, mainly in those based on the theme of music, the Creator is conceived as a Singer, a Music Master, a *Vīṇā* or a flute-player. In the very second song the Creator is addressed as the *Surer-Guru*⁶⁹ (the Preceptor of tune). The flow of *Mandākinī*⁷⁰, the morning star and the *Kanakcāṁpā*⁷¹ are initiated in His tune. We, the music-loving human beings, beg initiation to tunes from him. The third song "*Tomār surer dhārā*"⁷² is composed on the imagery of the creation as a tonal stream beside which the poet wants his resort to be always in tunefulness. The fourth one images the Absolute as a Great Singer and the poet as an amazed listener. The extended metaphors in this song, "*Surer ālo*" (the light of tune) spreads throughout the universe, "*Surer hāṁṁ*" (the breeze of tune) blows throughout the sky and "*surer suradhuni*"⁷³ (the divine river of tune) flows through the rocks. The sixth song carries a unique metaphor, that is, the blaze of

tune (*surer agūn*)⁷⁴ illuminating everything including the human heart. It is interesting to note that Rabindranath was inspired to compose this song after seeing a painting of Sarasvati with *vīṇā*, painted by Asit Kumar Haldar⁷⁵. This reminds us of the medieval Indian *Rāgamālā* paintings corresponding to *rāgas* and *rāginīs* (classical melodies) and their meditational imageries as described by the then court poets.

*Agni-vīṇā bājaō tumi kemaṇ kare*⁷⁶ (how do you play the luminous *vīṇā*), the song 158 of the *Pūjā* section, brings forth the imagery of the reverberating sky full of orchestrating luminaries.

Let us also observe the song *Prabhu, tomār vīṇā yemni bāje āndhār majhe omni phote tārā*⁷⁷.

“O my Master! when you play your *vīṇā* in the dark, the stars are lit up. Let the same *vīṇā* be played in my life too. The darkness of my heart will be removed with tonal illumination and your bliss will glorify my life for ever.”

The very first song of Nature maybe specially marked as a song on cosmic orchestration: “*Viśvavīṇārabe viśvajana mohiche*”⁷⁸ (all the human beings of the world are being enchanted with the cosmic orchestration). The earth, the water, the forest and the sky—all always orchestrate beautifully, with expressive accompaniment. The spring, the rains and the autumn bring forth tonal and orchestric variations.

The song 8 of Nature is quite relevant to our present discussion. Heavenly bodies including the sun and the stars abound in the sky. The world is full of life. It is a great wonder that I am here amongst all. This very wonder evokes music in me. My blood-circulation responds to the cosmic rhythm of the limitless time-tide. With this wonder, music awakes in my soul. I pace my footsteps on the grassy terrain. I get startled with the soothing fragrance of blooms. The creation is profuse with blissful gifts. Music emerges from my being at these wonders. My life and senses are open to all such gifts. My quest for the unknown is caused through the known finite things of my surroundings. This is the wonder which generates my music. The song “*Ākāśbharā sūrya tārā, viśvabharā prān*”⁷⁹ is the lyric expression of the poet’s consciousness reacting to the wonderful creation.

"*Eso eso vasanta-dharātale*"⁸⁰ (invocation of the spring), the concluding song of the dance-drama *Citrāṅgadā*, depicts beauty *par excellence*. In clusters of fine poetic-cum-tonal clauses one would find here newer tonal flows (*nava tāna*), newer songs (*nava gāna*), new life, hilarious fragrant breeze, in-depth cosmic consciousness, jubilant swinging with exulting rhythms, flowery groves for amorous play and all such surplus wealth overflowing fullness of life and the creation. Furthermore, the spring is welcome to bring forth overflowing nectar during nocturnal trysts, resounded with music. The spring is manifest in the glow of the dawn, in moonlit night, in the cosy garden house, in the still water of the lake as well as in the rolling sea just like the flushes of thunderstorm. The spring overcasts the cities, terrains and forests. We receive the spring in our chores, words and minds. The spring resonates in the jingling anklets of rhythmic feet and in the rendering of sonorous voices. Nature responds in young shoots, leaves and blooms. The spring is welcome in youthful vigour, which conquers ageing. On the whole, mankind and the whole creation join together in the orchestration of the universe.

The remote past is brought forth in the living present in many a song. One such song is "*Oi āse oi ati bhairava harase*"⁸¹ (you comes the rains with tremendous joy). At the outset of the rains the poet recollects the ancient Indian imageries of beautiful women in natural costumes and cosmetics. They are engaged in grand orchestric band including the instruments like *mrdāṅga*, *mūrāja* and *muralī*. Torrential rain and storm remind the poet of the magnanimous orchestration of nature and of the rain-songs of the poet-composers of bygone ages.

In the course of lectures delivered in America Tagore says in his lecture entitled "The World of Personality"⁸²:

"Our individual minds are the strings which catch the rhythmic vibrations of this universal mind and respond in music of space and time. The quality and number and pitch of our mind-strings differ and their tuning has not yet come to its perfection, but their law is the law of the universal mind, which is the instrument of finitude upon which the Eternal Player plays his dance music of creation."⁸³

The musical personality of Tagore did not believe in utter silence after death. Even that inevitable event is musicalized. Addressing his affectionate inmates, the poet says :

“Grant me leave from the web of light and shades of all acquaintances of life. In the nameless solitude let me tune up myself with the multi-stringed orchestration of the Infinite.”⁸⁴

Man and his music cannot be absolute and autonomous. Man derives his music from the orchestration of the universe and finally he has to merge his music into the same infinite orchestration of the universe again.

VII. THE CONCLUSIONS

The Reality must be Absolute and One. We can endeavour to approach it from various perspectives only. The Tagorean concept of Reality is pluralistic, though monistic at the end. In Tagorean sense, Appearance and Reality are not necessarily opposed to each other. All significant appearances fall within the realm of Reality. Appearance emerges from the Reality since the latter is revealed by virtue of appearances only. Man-in-the-Universe is the most precious aspect of the evolution of the Universe since it is Man who endeavours to know and realize the Reality. Despite possibilities of mal-observation, illusion, delusion and falsity, man's yearnings for Reality have been creative in all arts and sciences.

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19. "Sāhitye Navatva" (the newness or originality of literature), *Sāhityer Pathe*, *ibid.*, p. 334.
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সাক্ষাৎকার : উৎপল দত্তর সঙ্গে

তু.সা.: আপনি কোন্-কোন্ নাট্যদলের সঙ্গে যুক্ত ছিলেন বিভিন্ন সময়ে, সেটা যদি আমাদের বলেন।

উৎপল দত্ত : আমি Little Theatre Group এবং ভারতীয় গণনাট্য সঙ্ঘ। এবং তারপরে এখন L.T.G.-রই যেটা পরিবর্তিত সংস্করণ, People's Little Theatre। এ ছাড়া আমি আর কখনো কোনো দলের সঙ্গে যুক্ত ছিলাম না—বাংলাদেশে। তবে আমি একটি পেশাদার British নাট্যগোষ্ঠীর সঙ্গে যুক্ত ছিলাম দু'বছর, সেটা হচ্ছে Shakespeareana International Theatre Company যাঁরা Birmingham থেকে এখানে এসেছিলেন।

তু.সা.: কোন্ দু'বছর?

উ.দ.: সেটা হচ্ছে ১৯৫২-৫৩। আগে অবশ্য ১৯৪৭ সালে তাদের সঙ্গে ছ'মাস যুক্ত ছিলাম। তারপর ১৯৫২-৫৩ সালে তাদের সঙ্গে যুক্ত ছিলাম।

তু.সা.: '৪৭ সালে আপনি কোনো অভিনয় করেছিলেন?

উ.দ.: হ্যাঁ।

তু.সা.: কী নাটক?

উ.দ.: তখন তারা এসেছিল একটি বিশুদ্ধ Shakespeare programme নিয়ে।

তাতে *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar*, তারপর *Taming of the Shrew* ইত্যাদি একাধিক Shakespeare-এর নাটকে অভিনয় করি। আর ৫২-৫৩ সালে যখন ওরা আসে তখন ওঁরা Shakespeare ছাড়াও Sheridan তারপর—।

তু.সা.: Sheridan-এর কোন নাটক?

উ.দ.: Sheridan-এর *She Stoops to Conquer* নয়। না না; Goldsmith এবং Sheridan-এর *Rivals* এবং *School for Scandal*।

তু.সা.: সবগুলোতেই আপনি অভিনয় করেন?

উ.দ.: এগুলোতে আমি অভিনয় করি। এবং হ্যাঁ, তো, দ্বিতীয়বারে এ ছাড়াও *Charley's Aunt* -টাস্ট ধরনের কিছু নাটক আমরা অভিনয় করি। ভারত এবং পাকিস্তানে।

তু.সা.: বাংলাদেশের কেউ আপনাদের সঙ্গে অভিনয় করেছিলেন, মানে বাংলাদেশ থেকে?

উ.দ.: না, যখন ওরা '৪৭ সালে এসেছিল তখন প্রতাপ রায় বলে L.T.G.-রই একজন প্রতিষ্ঠাতা সদস্য, আমার সঙ্গেই ছিল। কিন্তু ৫২-৫৩-তে আর কেউ ছিলেন না।

তু.সা.: আচ্ছা, এই Shakespeare-এর অভিনয়গুলোতে আপনি' কী কী ভূমিকা নিয়েছিলেন?

উ.দ.: Shakespeare-এ—আচ্ছা *Othello*-তে আমি প্রথমে করতাম Brabantio, পরে Iago করেছি। *Macbeth*-এ প্রথমে করতাম Ross, পরে Macduff করেছি। *Merchant of Venice*-এ আমি চিরদিনই Gratiano করেছি। তারপর *Taming of the Shrew*-তে আমি Hortensio করেছি, ইত্যাকার ইত্যাদি।

তু.সা.: আচ্ছা, আপনার সেই প্রিয়তম নাটক *Timon of Athens* কখনো করেছেন?

উ.দ.: না, জীবনে কখনো করার সুযোগ হয়নি। তবে তার অভিনয় দেখার সুযোগ হয় জার্মানিতে।

তু.সা.: আচ্ছা এ-দেশে আপনি কী-কী নাটক দেখেছেন, যা আপনার ভালো লেগেছে, মানে অনুপ্রাণিত হয়েছেন।

উ.দ.: তাহলে তো প্রথমেই বলতে হয় Moscow-র Myakovsky থিয়েটার। সেখানে সবচেয়ে বেশি আমি যেটাতে প্রভাবান্বিত হয়েছি ব'লে মনে হয়, সেটা হ'লো Oklopkov-এর পরিচালনায় *Ossian* নাটক, অকিয়ান, ওদের ভাষায়। তারপর বলতে হয় Berliner-Ensemble, সেখানে ৬৪ সাল থেকে ৭১-এর মধ্যে একাধিকবার যাবার ফলে Berliner-Ensemble-এ ধরুন—৬৪ কেন বলছি, প্রথমবার ৬২—সেবার ছিল, সেবার যে-প্রযোজনা সবচেয়ে চমকপ্রদ ব'লে আমার মনে হয়েছে সেটা হচ্ছে Brecht-এর *St. Joan of the Stockyards* এবং তাছাড়া Berliner-Ensemble-এর নাটক দেখে, যাকে বলে অনুপ্রেরণা যথেষ্ট লাভ করেছি বলা যেতে পারে। কিন্তু তা ছাড়া Comische Oper ব'লে একটি দল আছে। অপেরা আরকি। তাঁরা Opera করেন, কিন্তু সে অপেরা আমার মতে নাট্যপ্রযোজনার একটা আদর্শস্থল। দৃষ্টান্ত *Wergenstein*, পূর্ব বার্লিনে এগুলো। আর London-এ মানে Britain-এছাড়া একটিমাত্র যে-নাটক আমার অত্যন্ত ভালো লেগেছিল, যার প্রযোজনা আমাকে প্রভাবান্বিত করেছে সেটা হ'লো *Royal Hunt of the Sun*, Chichester Festival-এ দেখেছিলাম। Shaffer-এর *Royal Hunt*, সেটা হচ্ছে ১৯৬৪ সালে। তাছাড়া Chekov—British Production-এ Chekov আমার মতে মস্কোর সমকক্ষ তো বটেই, কোনো-কোনো ক্ষেত্রে আরও উঁচুধরনের—যখন Olivier এবং Michael Redgrave একসঙ্গে হয়ে করেন, *Three Sisters* অথবা *Uncle Vanya* অত্যন্ত ভালো। কিন্তু তা ছাড়া British নাটক, আমার মনে হয় না, প্রযোজনার দিক থেকে বা অভিনয়ের দিক থেকে Germany বা Soviet Union-এর সঙ্গে পাল্লা দিতে পারে। আর

হ্যাঁ, Prague-এ। প্রাগ-এর থিয়েটার আমাকে খুবই অনুপ্রাণিত করে, বিশেষ করে ওদের যে Til Theatre আছে। তাদের এবারের প্রযোজনা হচ্ছে *Mütter Courage*, সে একটা নতুন চমকের মতো। মানে Brecht যে এভাবে প্রযোজনা করা যায়, আগে আমার ধারণাতেই ছিলোনা।

তু.সা.: এবার আমরা কিছুটা বাংলাদেশের ক্ষেত্রে এসে পড়ি। আচ্ছা, আপনি বিদেশে রবীন্দ্রনাথের কোনো প্রযোজনা দেখেছেন, মানে বিদেশীয় ভাষায়।

উ.দ.: হ্যাঁ দেখেছি। সে অতি যাচ্ছেতাই মাল।

তু.সা.: কোথায় দেখেছেন একটু বলুন।

উ.দ.: Berlin / Weimar থেকে এলো ‘ডাকঘর’ করতে। সে যে কী পীড়াদায়ক বস্তু, সে ব’সে থাকা যায় না।

তু.সা.: আর কোথাও কিছু দেখেছেন?

উ.দ.: হ্যাঁ দেখেছিলাম। রবীন্দ্রনাথের *Red Oleanders*—London-এর Unity Theatre এ। সে আরও খারাপ জিনিষ। Weimar-এ তবু পোশাক-টোশাক বেশ ভালোই ছিলো। মাঝে-মাঝে তবু মনে হচ্ছিলো যে এটা আমাদেরই দেশের কথা। Unity Theatre-এ যে-ছেলেরা করলো তারা ঠিক ক’রে নিয়েছে যে ওর কোনো প্রয়োজন নেই, মানে সেটাকে খুব সরবেই বলছে যে পোশাক-টোশাকের কোনো প্রয়োজন নেই, যেমন-তেমন নামলেই হ’লো। কিন্তু সেখানে সেই অবস্থায়, সেই পরিস্থিতিতে ‘ডাকঘর’ দেখতে—মানে খুব কষ্ট হচ্ছিল আর কী। কারণ এটা ঠিক নয় যে নাটকে কোনো একটা বিশেষ দেশ বা কালের ইঙ্গিত আনার কোনো প্রয়োজন নেই। আমি সেটা মনে করি না; আমি মনে করি যে দেশ-কালের ইঙ্গিত সম্পূর্ণভাবে বজায় রাখতে পারলে তবেই তার মধ্যে যে শাস্ত্রত সত্যগুলো আছে সেগুলো ফুটবে, নইলে ফোটে না। মানে abstract শাস্ত্রত ব’লে তো কিছু নেই, কতগুলো concrete image ধ’রেই তাকে পরিস্ফুট হ’তে হয়। সেই দিক থেকে Unity Theatre-এর *Red Oleanders* একটা খুব যাচ্ছেতাই ব্যাপার।

তু.সা.: আচ্ছা, আপনি বলেছেন যে আপনি প্রথমে ইংরেজি অভিনয় দিয়ে শুরু করেছেন, এবং প্রধানত Shakespeare করেছেন; এবং সেটাকে আপনি একটা waste of time বলেছেন; যে এই সময়টা কিছুটা অপব্যয় হয়েছিলো। তারপরে আপনি বাংলায় করলেন অভিনয়। ইংরেজিতেই বা প্রথম কেন অভিনয় করেছিলেন, এবং তারপরে বাংলাতেই বা কেন এলেন?

উ.দ.: ইংরিজিতে প্রথম অভিনয় করেছিলাম, কেননা আমি ছোটবেলা থেকেই ইংরিজিতেই করছি মানে তখনো তো চেতনা আসেনি, জ্ঞানগম্যি একেবারে হয়নি, সুতরাং ক'রেই চলেছি, গড্ডলিকা প্রবাহের মতো চলেছি, তার সঙ্গে নিজেকে মিশিয়ে; কেননা স্কুলে থাকতেই St. Xaviers-এর বিখ্যাত Shakespeare প্রযোজনার কথা তো আপনারা জানেন, রীতিমতো চমকপ্রদ।

তু.সা.: মানে Father Weaver-এর?

উ.দ.: হ্যাঁ, Father Weaver-এর নেতৃত্বে সেগুলি হ'তো, সেগুলি খুব চাঞ্চল্য সৃষ্টি করতো। এখানকার কিছু মানে সেই বুদ্ধিজীবী মহল আরকি। এবং তাদের সঙ্গে অভিনয় করতে-করতেই তারপরে Shakespeareana International Theatre Co. এল। তাঁরা আমাকে একটা সুযোগ দিলেন, আর আমি অভিনয় করতে লেগে গেলাম, ইংরিজিতে; কিন্তু তাতে যে নাটকের প্রধান উদ্দেশ্যই ব্যর্থ হচ্ছে সেটা বোঝবার মতো বুদ্ধিশুদ্ধি তখন বোধহয় আমার ছিলো না। তারপরে আমার বাংলা নাটকের দিকে আকৃষ্ট হওয়ার মূল কারণ হচ্ছে মার্ক্সবাদের সঙ্গে পরিচিত হওয়া, এবং মার্ক্সবাদী-লেনিনবাদী চিন্তা।

তু.সা.: সেটা আপনার কখন ঘটে?

উ.দ.: সেটা আমার কলেজে থাকতেই হয়েছিল, কিন্তু তখন কোনো উপায় ছিলো না। তখন ইংরিজি পেশাদার নাট্যসম্প্রদায়ের সঙ্গে চুক্তিবদ্ধ আমি। সুতরাং বাংলা নাটক করার কোনো সময়ই ওরা দেয় না, দেওয়ার কোনো কথাও নয়। কিন্তু তারপরে, তখন থেকে মার্ক্সবাদী-লেনিনবাদী যে চিন্তা ও সংস্কৃতি, সেটাই আমাকে চোখে আঙুল দিয়ে দেখায় যে জনতাকে বাদ দিয়ে তো আর নাটক হয় না। একান্তে ব'সে নাট্যসাধনা হয় না। নিভূতে ব'সে হয়তো যোগব্যায়াম-টায়াম করা যায়, বা গুহায় ব'সে ধ্যান করা যায় বা ছবি আঁকাও হয়তো যায়, কবিতাও লেখা যায়। কোনো-কোনো কবি ব'লেও থাকেন যে আমার কবিতা জনতার কাছে পৌছবে না, এ তো জানা কথাই, জনতা অত্যন্ত নির্বোধ। এমনকি একজন চলচ্চিত্রকারও একবার ব'লে ফেললেন—

তু.সা.: আপনি কি রবীন্দ্রনাথের কথা বলছেন?

উ.দ.: না, না, না! মাথা খারাপ।

তু.সা.: না, রবীন্দ্রনাথের ঠিক এইধরনের একটা পঙ্ক্তি আছে তো, আমার কবিতা জানি আমি—

উ.দ.: হয় না সর্বত্রগামী—সেইজন্য তো তিনি অনুশোচনা করছেন—রবীন্দ্রনাথ অনুশোচনা করছেন। রবীন্দ্রনাথ কখনোই এ-কথা বলছেন না যে জনতা আমার

কবিতা বুঝবে কেন, জনতার সেরকম জ্ঞানগম্য হয়নি—এটা রবীন্দ্রনাথের কথা নয়। একজন চলচ্চিত্রকার—একবার তাঁর একটা ছবি একেবারে flop করবার পর তাঁকে জিগ্যেস করা হ’লো—আপনার ছবিটা flop করলো কেন? আপনি এত একটা ভালো ছবি করলেন। তিনি বললেন—আমার ছবি flop করেনি জনতা flop করেছে, audience flop করেছে। তিনি খুব দর্প সহকারে কথাটা বললেন, কিন্তু এই মার্ক্সবাদী-লেনিনবাদী চিন্তা আমাকে প্রথম চোখে আঙুল দিয়ে দেখালো যে এই কথাগুলো সত্যি নয়, যে জনতার জন্যই...

তু.সা.: আচ্ছা আপনি জনতার সান্নিধ্যের কথা বললেন—নাটকের ক্ষেত্রে, এবং সে দিক দিয়ে আপনি কিন্তু আরেক জায়গায় বলেছেন যে Shakespeare প্রযোজনা এখানে ব্যর্থ হয়েছিল, কেননা জনতা সেটাকে সেভাবে নেয়নি।—তারপর আপনি যখন নতুন যাত্রা স্টাইলে করার কথা ভাবছেন, তখনই আপনার মনে হয়েছে যে Shakespeare সবচেয়ে বেশি পৌছতে পারেন জনতার কাছাকাছি। তা সেটাকে আপনি কীভাবেই বা experiment করলেন, আর যাত্রায় Shakespeare-কে কীভাবেই বা আনা যায়, আর Shakespeare-এর চরিত্র কতদূর বিশ্বাস্যভাবে ফুটে ওঠে তাতে, সে-দিকটা সম্বন্ধে আপনি যদি কিছু বলেন—অন্তত আপনার attempt-এর দিকটা। এ-বিষয়ে আপনি কী ফল পেয়েছেন—কতটা response পেয়েছেন তাদের কাছ থেকে?

উ.দ.: হ্যাঁ। প্রথমত, আমি এ-কথা বলিনি যে Shakespeare এখানকার জনতা নিতে পারেনি। আমি বলেছিলাম—আপনি যে-লেখা থেকে উদ্ধৃত করছেন সেই লেখাতেই বলেছিলাম, যে ইংরিজিতে যতদিন Shakespeare করছিলাম ততদিন আমরা এখানে—কলকাতা শহরের কিছু বুদ্ধিজীবী, কিছু—ইংরিজিতে, মানে Shakespeare-এর ভাষায় যাদের বলা যায় fashion mongers, তারা আদৌ Shakespeare বুঝতেন কিনা সে-বিষয়ে আমার ঘোরতর সন্দেহ আছে; কিন্তু একটা রেওয়াজ দাঁড়িয়ে গিয়েছিল যে St. Xaviers-এর হল-এ, এবং পরে New Empire-এ গিয়ে বসতে হয়, কেননা Shakespeare অভিনয় হচ্ছে—উৎপল-টুৎপলেরা কী যেন করছে Shakespeare। তা এই একটা fashion মাঝে কলকাতায় উঠেছিল। তখন বোধহয় আপনাদের বয়স অনেক কম ছিল, আপনারা সেই ভয়ঙ্কর পরিস্থিতিতে কখনো পড়েননি। কেননা সেই যে-দর্শকেরা সামনে বসে থাকতো, তারা Shakespeare-এর নাটকে যে প্রচণ্ড হাস্যরস আছে, আমরা কোনোদিন কাউকে হাসতে শুনিনি। বা, ওখানে যে প্রচুর করুণরস আছে, কোনোদিন কাউকে কাঁদতেও দেখিনি। শুধু হয়তো বহুদূরে

New Empire-এর তেঁতলার সবচেয়ে সম্ভার সীটে কিছু ছাত্র এসে বসত—ইংরিজি বিভাগের ছাত্র বোধকরি—ওই পেছন থেকে যা দু-একটা কথা আমরা—অভিনেতারা শুনতেন কতগুলো শব্দ, আওয়াজ, হাসি প্রভৃতি যাতে অভিনেতারা বুঝতেন, ভাবতেন যে হ্যাঁ নাটক অন্তত কিছু লোকের কাছে পৌঁছেছে। বাদবাকি সব অত্যন্ত সুন্দর পোষাক পরে সামনে বসে থাকতেন। আর তিনটে কি চারটে show-র পরেই নাটক ব্যস আর চলতো না, কেননা অত লোকই নেই—অত সুন্দর পোষাকপরা লোক কলকাতায় নেই। আর তখন আর-একটা ব্যাপার দাঁড়িয়েছিল, এখানে যাঁরা ইংরেজ ছিলেন, তাঁরা কিছুতেই বাঙালি বা ভারতীয়রা যখন নাটক করে ইংরিজিতে, তখন আর কিছুতেই তা দেখতে আসতেন না। কেননা ওঁদের নিজেদের একটা দল ছিল কলকাতায়—Dramatic Club of Calcutta—যাঁরা নাট্যপ্রযোজনায় দিকে যথেষ্ট সুসংহত এবং উন্নত চিন্তার পরিচয় রেখেছিলেন এককালে—সত্যিই ভালো নাটক করতেন, যদিও নাটকগুলি অকিঞ্চিৎকর হ'তো; অধিকাংশ ক্ষেত্রেই কতগুলো বাজে Drawing Room Comedy নিয়ে তাঁরা আসতেন। কিন্তু তাদের প্রযোজনায় আন্তরিকতা ছিলো, শৃঙ্খলা ছিলো, যেহেতু ইংরেজ জাতিই বোধকরি স্বভাবতই খুব শৃঙ্খলাভক্ত যাই হোক তাঁরা আসতেন না। আর এঁরা আসতেন। এই নাটকগুলি ক'রে একেবারে অর্থহীন কতগুলি সময় আমাদের নষ্ট হয়েছে। কিন্তু তারপরে আমরা প্রথম Shakespeare বাংলায় করলাম *Macbeth*. প্রথমে ভারতীয় গণনাট্য সংঘের তত্ত্বাবধানে বা প্রযোজনায়।

তু.সা.: কোন সালে, আপনার মনে আছে?

উ.দ.: বলছি—সেটা প্রথম ১৯৫১-য়, *Macbeth* এর একটা অত্যন্ত কুৎসিত কদর্য অনুবাদ।

তু.সা.: কার করা?

উ.দ.: যেটা করেছিলেন অধ্যাপক নীরেন রায় আর সে ভয়াবহ অনুবাদ আমাদের করতে হয়—আমরা করতে প্রায় বাধ্য হই আর-কী, কেননা অধ্যাপক নীরেন রায় Communist Party-রও একজন সদস্য ছিলেন এবং আমাদের শিক্ষকও ছিলেন। একদিক থেকে তিনি একটা লিখেছেন, আর ভারতীয় গণনাট্য সঙ্ঘ হাতের কাছেই আছে, তো তা ছাড়া কে আর করবে, সুতরাং আমরা করতে বাধ্য হতাম। এবং আমরা rehearsal-এ খুব হাসাহাসিও করতাম। অবশ্য নীরেনবাবু এলে আমরা সব চূপ হয়ে যেতাম এবং ভাব দেখাতাম যে ভীষণ ভালো একটা অনুবাদ হয়েছে। যাই হোক তো সেটা প্রথমে করা হয়। তারপরে,

বুঝতেই পারা যাচ্ছে যে দর্শক ওর চেয়ে বোধহয় ইংরিজিটাই ভালো বুঝতো, আমাদের গ্রামের দর্শক, কেননা সে বাংলা এত জটিল এত আড়ষ্ট, যে কিছুই তাতে কোনো রস নেই। তো, তারপরে L.T.G.-র পক্ষ থেকে, ইঞ্জিনিয়ার কবি যতীন্দ্রনাথ সেনগুপ্তর *Macbeth* অনুবাদের অভিনয় আমরা করি—এবং সে-অভিনয়ে আমরা প্রথম বুঝতে পারি যে William Shakespeare-ই হচ্ছেন বাংলাদেশের গ্রামের মানুষের সবচেয়ে কাছের নাট্যকার। এমনকি রবীন্দ্রনাথ—রবীন্দ্রনাথও যা দিতে পারেননি, Shakespeare বাংলাদেশের গ্রামের মানুষকে সেটা দিতে পারেন। কেননা এই *Macbeth*-এ যা-যা উপাদান আর কী তার গল্পাংশে, কাহিনীর অংশে যে-উপাদান সে-উপাদানের সঙ্গে আমাদের বাংলাদেশের গ্রামের মানুষ যাত্রার মাধ্যমে বহুদিন থেকে পরিচিত। রাজা—রাজার বিরুদ্ধে ষড়যন্ত্র; দুই, তারপর রাজা খুন হয়ে গেলেন, তারপরে *Macbeth* সিংহাসন দখল করলেন, Banquo-কে হত্যা করালেন—এই যে দৃশ্যে-দৃশ্যে হত্যা, তারপরে ডাকিনী, তারপরে ভূত—এইসব মিলে—যেটাকে অনেক উল্গাসিক melodramatic ব'লে বাতিল ক'রে দেন, আসলে সেই melodrama-র মোড়কে মুড়েই Shakespeare তো তাঁর বক্তব্য রাখেন—তা আমরা দেখলাম; যদিও আমাদের রঙ্গমঞ্চ নেই, কিছু নেই, এবং আমাদের দল প্রথম শুরু হয়েছে মাত্র, বাংলায় আমরা মানে L.T.G. ৯৭টি অভিনয় করি এবং বেশিরভাগই হচ্ছে কলকাতা থেকে অনেক দূরে—গ্রামাঞ্চলে—

তু.সা. : যেমন?

উ.দ. : যেমন কি?

তু.সা. : কোন্-কোন্ জায়গায়?

উ.দ. : সে কি এখন মনে আছে? বেগমপুর ব'লে একটা জায়গার কথা শুধু আমি আপনাদের বলতে পারি, সেটা আমার স্পষ্ট মনে আছে—আমরা তার আগে ওখানে I.P.T.A.-র পক্ষ থেকে 'বিসর্জন' ক'রে এসেছিলাম—এবং সেই 'বিসর্জন' দেখার পর ওরা লাঠি নিয়ে প্রায় মারতে বাকি রেখেছিলো। কেননা ওরা কিছুই বুঝতে পারল না। এবং শেষকালে দেবীমূর্তি ভেঙ্গে-টেঙ্গে ফেললো—এ কী—এরা তো পাষণ্ড, কী পাষণ্ডতা—এই ব'লে তারা লাঠিসোঁটা নিয়ে মারতে এসেছিলো। সেই বেগমপুরে আমরা পরে *Macbeth* করেছি, এবং তারা মনে করেছে যে এ-গল্প তাদেরকে বাঁচিয়ে রেখেছে। তারা কঁদেছে, হেসেছে, তারা—যখন সেই দ্বাররক্ষক—Porter এসেছে তখন সেই কুড়ি বাইশ হাজার লোকের একসঙ্গে হাস্যধ্বনিতে নাটক বন্ধ হয়েছিল কিছুক্ষণ এবং সেই

Porter-কে যেভাবে ওরা অভ্যর্থনা জানালো এবং তারপরে যেভাবে ওরা কাঁদলো, এবং তারপরে লেডী ম্যাকবেথের দুঃখে ওরা যেভাবে আশ্রুত হয়ে পড়লো, তারপরে যেরকম *Macbeth*-এর শেষ দৃশ্যে এসে যখন ওরা একটা ভয় এবং—ভয়কে আমি বলছি Aristotelian অর্থে—সেই ভয়ে যখন ওরা স্তব্ধ হয়ে থাকলো, তখন বুঝলাম, যে তারা আমাদের Shakespeare-এর নাটকের মূলে চলে গেছে, কোনো বাধা হয়নি এবং ওই বাইরের পোষাক—ওরা Scottish পোষাক প'রে আছে কিনা—সেটা তারা একেবারে লক্ষ্যই করেনি—কেননা সেইখানে গিয়ে Scotland, England, বাংলাদেশ, সব জনতা এক হয়ে গেছে—এটা শুধু Shakespeare-এর মতো নাট্যকারের শক্তিতে হয় আর-কি। রবীন্দ্রনাথের নাটক—বাঙালি নাট্যকারের নাটক—বাঙালি কবির নাটক—যতটা কাছে যেতে পারে আমাদের দেশের দর্শকের—তার চেয়ে, এই ছ'হাজার মাইল দূরের এই এবং চারশো বছর আগের নাট্যকারের নাটক ঢের বেশি কাছে চলে যেতে পারে, এটা দেখে সেদিন আমরা বিস্ময় মেনেছিলাম।

তু.সা.: তার কারণ কী মনে হয় আপনার?

উ.দ.: ওই যে আপনাকে বললাম এক্ষুনি যে, কাহিনীর অংশ—নাট্যকাহিনীর যেটা অংশ, যেটা বাইরের মোড়ক—সেটাকে খুব উত্তেজনাপূর্ণ না-রাখলে বাংলাদেশের গ্রামের মানুষকে টেনে আনা যায় না।

তু.সা.: এটা তো আপনি L.T.G.-র *Macbeth*-এর কথা বললেন।

উ.দ.: হ্যাঁ।

তু.সা.: কিন্তু নাট্য আন্দোলনের পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে দর্শকের পক্ষে এই Shakespeare-এর খোলস ভেদ ক'রে তার ভেতরে যে-কথাটা আছে তা কি খুব বোঝা সুবিধে, বা সহজ?

উ.দ.: বুঝতে পারলাম না। না, ওর ভেতরটা যদি তারা বুঝতে না-ও পারে, মানে ধরুন *Hamlet* নাটক যদি আমরা অভিনয় করি—এটা ঠিকই যে *Hamlet*-কে নিয়ে এক লাইব্রেরী বই লেখা হয়ে গেছে, *Hamlet* সম্পর্কে। সুতরাং এটা যাঁরা সবচেয়ে বড়ো-বড়ো পণ্ডিত তাঁদেরকেও ভাবিয়ে তুলেছে, আবার একেবারে যারা সাধারণ মানুষ, আমাদের দেশের যারা গ্রামের মানুষ, যারা যাত্রা দেখতে অভ্যস্ত, আমার মনে হয়, *Hamlet*-এর ভেতরে তারা যদি না-ও ঢোকে, কোনো তো কিছু এসে যাচ্ছে না।

তু.সা.: না। তবে আপনি তো নাট্য আন্দোলনের জন্য অনেক কিছু করেছেন, সেই হিসেবে বলছি যে, নাট্য আন্দোলনের পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে Shakespeare-এর গুরুত্ব কতখানি?

উ.দ.: আমার মতে, একটা বিরাট গুরুত্ব। Shakespeare-এর নাটকের গুরুত্ব মানে আমাদের এ তো একটা basic কথা। অনেকে, ইদানীং একটা কালাপাহাড়ী মত সৃষ্টি হয়েছে যে—সর্বপ্রকার, মানে যে-নাটকে মাও সে তুঙ অথবা তার *Red Book* থেকে কোনো quotation নেই, সেটা প্রতিবিপ্লবী এবং প্রতিক্রিয়াশীল—কিন্তু আমরা তা মনে করি না। আমরা মনে করছি যে এটা একটা মধ্যবিস্তৃপ্ত পাতিবুর্জোয়া বিচ্যুতি। শ্রমিকশ্রেণী এ-ধরনের চিন্তা করে না। এবং মার্ক্সবাদ-লেনিনবাদ হচ্ছে শ্রমিকশ্রেণীর মতবাদ। অর্থাৎ শ্রমিকশ্রেণীর দৃষ্টিভঙ্গী অর্জন করিতে না-পারিলে মার্ক্সবাদ-লেনিনবাদের কিছুই বুঝা গেল না। এবং শ্রমিকশ্রেণীর দৃষ্টিভঙ্গীতে শ্রমিকদের বক্তব্য চিরদিন ছিলো, সৃষ্টি তো করি আমরা দুই হাতে—অতএব সৃষ্টির মূল্য আমরা যেরকম বুঝি, তেমন আর কোনো শ্রেণী বুঝতে পারে না। সুতরাং ও Shakespeare, Goethe, রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও-সব আমার। তোমরা সেটাকে সিদ্ধকব্দী ক'রে রেখেছো, আমরা সেটাকে ভেঙে বের ক'রে জনতার কাছে বিলিয়ে দেবো। এই হচ্ছে শ্রমিকশ্রেণীর দৃষ্টিভঙ্গী। কিন্তু এটাও ঠিক, যে শুধু Shakespeare বা শুধু রবীন্দ্রনাথ নিয়ে জনতার সামনে যাওয়ার কোনো মানে হয় না। আমাদেরকে সেই সঙ্গে আজকের নাটক, আজকের বিপ্লবী নাটক, বিপ্লব প্রচার, সবই করতে হবে। কিন্তু তার মানে আবার এই নয় যে রঙ্গমঞ্চে দাঁড়িয়ে শুধু একটা লাল পতাকা নাড়লেই খুব একটা বিপ্লবী ব্যাপার, আর যে-যে William Shakespeare-এর নাটক করেছে সে একটা প্রতিক্রিয়াশীল চক্রের, মানে C.I.A.-র দালাল এটাও ঠিক না।

তু.সা.: আচ্ছা, একটা প্রশ্ন করি। আপনি বললেন না Scottish পোষাক থাকা সত্ত্বেও ওই গ্রামের লোকের কোনোমাত্র অসুবিধে হয় না, এ থেকে আপনি কি মনে করেন যে adaptation-এর সত্যিই কোনো প্রয়োজন হয় না—যদি নাটকটি ঠিকমতো করা যায়? তাহলে ধরুন Christmas-কে বিজয়াদশমী করা, অথবা বীরভূমের dialect-এ পরিণত করা কোনো একটি বিশেষ ভাষাকে—সেটার কোনো দরকার নেই?

উ.দ.: হ্যাঁ, আমার মতে নাট্যকার যদি একজন বিরাট নাট্যকার হন, Shakespeare হন বা Bertolt Brecht হন, তাহলে কোনোরকম পোষাক পরিবর্তনের প্রয়োজন হয় না, adaptation-এর কোনো প্রয়োজন হয় না।

তু.সা.: এমন-কি যদি Chekov-ও হন।

উ.দ.: হ্যাঁ, যদি Chekov হন। কিন্তু অবশ্যই যদি আমরা যদি এখন ইয়ে R. Buckhoft-এর (?) *Sheep on the Runway* নাটক করতে যাই, সে-নাটকের

মধ্যে এমন একটা বিশালত্ব বিরাটত্ব কিছু নেই যা সবরকম বাইরের মোড়ককে অতিক্রম করে দর্শককে তার ভেতরে নিয়ে যেতে পারে। সেখানে, হয়তো সে-নাটক যদি কারো করার ইচ্ছে হয়, তো তাকে adapt-ই করতে হবে বা এর একটা কিছু [বদল] করতে হবে।

তু.সা.: আচ্ছা, আপনারা *Othello*, *Hamlet* ছাড়া আর যে-কিছু comedy করেছেন, সেই comedy-তে কীরকম সাড়া পেয়েছিলেন—*Twelfth Night* এবং *Midsummer Night's Dream*, এ-সমস্ততে কীরকম সাড়া পেয়েছিলেন?

উ.দ.: বিরাট সাড়া পেয়েছিলাম। বনগায় *Midsummer Night's Dream*-এর অভিনয় যদি আপনারদেরকে দেখাতে পারতাম, তাহলে আপনারা বুঝতে পারতেন। কেননা সে-দর্শক, মানে একেবারে পুরোপুরি যাত্রার দর্শক—ওরা থিয়েটারও দেখে না। বুঝেছেন, থিয়েটারও ওদের কাছে খুব একটা ভালো জিনিষ না। এই, শহর থেকে আসে যায়, এইরকম। মানে ওরা হচ্ছে সত্যিকারের যাত্রার দর্শক।

তু.সা.: আপনারা যাত্রার মধ্যে করেছিলেন?

উ.দ.: না, তিনদিক খোলা প্ল্যাটফর্ম, তিনদিকে দর্শকরা বসেছে, চারদিকে নয়, কেননা আমাদের কতগুলো illusion-এর দৃশ্য আছে, অরণ্যের মধ্যে যেগুলো আমরা চারদিকে লোক বসলে দেখাতে পারতাম না।

তু.সা.: আপনারা কি 'চৈতালীরাতের স্বপ্নটা' করেছিলেন?

উ.দ.: হ্যাঁ। তো, সে দেখে তাদের ওই আনন্দ, সেই নির্ভেজাল অনাবিল আনন্দ যদি আপনারা প্রত্যক্ষ করতে পারতেন তাহলে আমার পক্ষে বোঝানো সহজ হতো। এখানে অনেকে তো অনেকরকম comedy লিখেছেন, সেগুলো—মানে নামের যোগ্য comedy তো খুব কমই আছে আমাদের বাংলা ভাষায় এটা—মানে নাটকের দিক থেকে বলছি—এটা খুবই একটা পরিতাপের বিষয়। কেননা এখানে হাসাতে গেলেই কাতুকুতু দিতে আরম্ভ করে; আর নাট্যকার যদি হাসির নাটক লেখেন, তাহলে অনেক লোক খুব অপমানবোধ করেন, সবাই মনে করেন যে এটা আমাকে ছাড়া আর কাকে বললো? এই যে রসের অভাব, এটা আমাদের আছে একটু। কিন্তু ওই *Midsummer Night's Dream* করে—সেই যে হাসির ঢেউ বারবার ভেঙে পড়ছিল, তার কোনো তুলনা আমি এখন পর্যন্ত পাইনি। কোনো বাঙালি [comedy] নাটক করে শুধু ওই 'বুড়ো শালিকের ঘাড়ে রৌ' আর 'একেই কি বলে সভ্যতা' এই দুটি একাক্ষ ছাড়া?—এছাড়া আমরা আরো অনেক করেছি—'অলীকবাবু'-টাবু অনেক-কিছু করেছি, কিন্তু কখনোই দর্শকদের মধ্যে ওইরকম আনন্দ দেখিনি। তারপরে আমরা *Twelfth*

Night করেছি। অবশ্য *Midsummer Night's Dream* যতটা সর্বত্রগামী, *Twelfth Night* হয়তো ততটা নয়, তবু গ্রামের ভেতরে ক'রে দেখেছি—

তু.সা.: কেন নয়?

উ.দ.: ওই যে, ওর মধ্যে বস্তু artifice রয়েছে, বুঝলেন—মানে artifice-টা হচ্ছে —ওই যে ছেলে আর মেয়ে একরকম দেখতে—আর ওকে চিনতে না-পেরে একে চেনে—একে চিনতে না-পেরে ওকে চেনে, *Midsummer Night's Dream*-এতে এটাই হচ্ছে deliberate—ওদিকে যত গুলিয়ে যাচ্ছে দর্শকের—দর্শকের নিজেরও গুলিয়ে যায় Lysandar, Demetrius, Helena, Hermia নিয়ে—ততই সে হাসে। কিন্তু *Twelfth Night*-এ গল্পের সূত্র শক্ত আছে। বিশেষ ক'রে Orsino, এই যে Orsino-Viola episode, Orsino-Olivia episode, তাদের এই যে প্রেমের ব্যাপারটা আছে, এটা ততটা সর্বত্রগামী ব'লে আমি মনে করছি না। আমরা অভিনয় করতে গিয়ে দেখেছি, এই অংশটা বুঝতে তাদের একটু অসুবিধে হয়। কিন্তু Sir Toby Belch, Aiguecheek ও Maria রঙ্গক্ষেত্রে এলেই সে একটা কাণ্ড উপস্থিত হয়।

তু.সা.: আপনারা কখনো Molière করেছেন?

উ.দ.: আমরা একবার করেছিলাম—*The Rogueries of Scapin—Les fourderies de Scapin*, বাংলায় করেছিলাম—

তু.সা.: কোন্ মঞ্চে?

উ.দ.: প্রথমে শুরু করেছিলাম St. Xaviers মঞ্চে—

তু.সা.: ছাত্রাবস্থায়?

উ.দ.: না, তখন ছাত্রাবস্থা আর না—কিন্তু আমাদের দলের মধ্যে কিছু-কিছু সদস্য ছিলেন ছাত্র।

তু.সা.: নাম কী ছিল নাটকটার?

উ.দ.: নাম! আমরা স্কাপিন নামে করেছিলাম নাটকটা—‘স্কাপিন’। আর তখন এটা যে খুব একটা বাইরে গ্রামে অভিনয় করতে পেরেছি তা নয়। কিন্তু দর্শকদের খুব ভালোই লেগেছিলো। মানে, হেসেছিলো খুব, অনাবিল আনন্দ বলা যেতে পারে।

তু.সা.: আচ্ছা, আপনারা শেক্সপীয়র চতুঃশত জন্মবার্ষিকীর পর, শেক্সপীয়র বা অন্য কোনো বিদেশী নাটক অভিনয় করেছেন?

উ.দ.: তারপরে Shakespeare অভিনয় আর আমি করিনি। ৬৪ সালের পর বিদেশী নাটক—‘প্রফেসর মামলক’ করেছি।

তু.সা.: কে adapt করেছিলেন?

উ.দ.: আমি—adapt নয়, অনুবাদ করেছিলাম German থেকে। ‘প্রফেসর মামলক’ খুব—একটা বেশি অভিনয় হয়নি। তার কারণ অবশ্য জনতা নয়, তার কারণ হচ্ছে সরকার—কেননা তখন সেটা হচ্ছে ৬৪ সালের শেষের দিক থেকেই শুরু হয় ওটা—তখন থেকেই বহুবিধ ভীতিপ্রদর্শন আরম্ভ হয়, সেই তখনই—

তু.সা.: কী নামে করেছিলেন?

উ.দ.: ‘প্রফেসর মামলক’। তখন নাট্য আন্দোলনের ওপর প্রচণ্ড চাপ আরম্ভ হয়েছিলো সরকার পক্ষ থেকে। এবং ‘প্রফেসর মামলক’কে ওরা মনে করেছিলো যে এই নাটকে ফ্যাসিবাদ উঠছে এইধরনের কথা বলা হয়েছে—অবশ্য সেটাই আমাদের বক্তব্য ছিলো। আমরা স্বীকার করছি যে সরকারের মূল্যায়ন একেবারে সঠিক ছিলো। আর কী করেছি।—আর ইয়ে করেছি 14th July রোম্যা রোলাঁ শতবার্ষিকীতে—বাংলা অনুবাদ করে করেছি—সে খুব বেশি অভিনয় হয়নি—কেননা সে এত বিপুল ব্যাপার। এই করেছি। আর বিদেশী নাটক বেশি কী করলাম? আর কি কিছু করলাম?

তু.সা.: আমার তো কিছু মনে পড়ছে না।

উ.দ.: না, আর করিনি।

তু.সা.: আচ্ছা, আপনি কি বিদেশী নাটক ক্রমশ কম করবেন—এবং নিজের লেখা নাটক, অথবা দিশী নাটক—এখানকার নাটক—এরকম কি কিছু ভাবছেন যে বিদেশী নাটকের এত করার প্রয়োজন আর তেমন নেই। বিশেষত adaptation-এর মাধ্যমে নাট্য আন্দোলন আনার যে এই একটা প্রবণতা দেখা যাচ্ছে—

উ.দ.: প্রবণতা।

তু.সা.: প্রবণতা—তার পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে আপনার কি দূরে যাওয়ার দরকার আছে?

উ.দ.: হ্যাঁ। আমরা চিরদিনই বিশ্বাস করি যে adaptation দিয়ে এখানকার মূল নাটককে replace তো করা যাবে না কখনো, এবং replace করতে চেষ্টা করাটাও বাতুলতা। খুব উঁচুদরের বিদেশী নাটক বা—সেটা যদি আমরা করতে যাই কখনো—এইভাবেই করবো—যে তার কী প্রয়োজনীয়তা আছে এখানে। একটু আগে আপনি যে-প্রশ্নটা করছিলেন আর-কি—তো তার প্রয়োজনীয়তা যাচাই করে সেটা adapt করা যেতে পারে। কিন্তু অবশ্যই প্রধানত আমরা এখানকার নাট্যকারের লেখা এখানকার বিষয়ে লেখা—নাট্যকারদের নাটক অভিনয় করতে আগ্রহী।

তু.সা.: আচ্ছা, আপনি Now-তে Calcutta Stage নামে একটা article লিখেছিলেন Iago নামে সেটা—

উ.দ.: সেটা তো Iago লিখেছিলো, আমি তো লিখিনি।

তু.সা.: তাতে তো আপনি বিদেশী নাটক—Durrenmat ইত্যাদি করা হয়নি বলে একটু আক্ষেপ ক'রেই লিখেছিলেন—আমাদের দেশে—

উ.দ.: না, আমি শুধু মানে যতদূর মনে পড়ছে, Iago লিখেছিলো এই কথা—যে বিদেশী নাটক—আমি এই কথাই লিখেছিলাম—যে বিদেশী নাটক যদি করতেই হয় তাহ'লে এইসমস্ত নাট্যকারদের একেবারে বাদ দিয়ে রেখে কী হচ্ছে—এটাই বলেছিলো। কিন্তু এটা ঠিকই যে, সবচেয়ে আদর্শ একটা দল বিদেশী নাটক যত কম করবে ততই ভালো। কিন্তু এই যেখানে-সেখানে—*Fingerprint* একটা মার্কিন ছবি দেখলাম—সেটা দেখেই একটা নাটক লিখে ফেললাম। এবং সেটাকে আবার—মানে—যদি গঙ্গাপদবাবু মারা যান তাহ'লে যে স্মারক স্মৃতিগ্রন্থ বেরোবে তাতে ওই নাটকটার একটু প্রচার ক'রে নিলাম। আমি মনে করি—এগুলো একেবারে—কী বলবো—অশ্লীল কার্যকলাপ। একদম অশ্লীল কার্যকলাপ। সেই পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে বলেছিলাম যে তাহ'লে Durrenmat করা যাক, Peter Weiss করা যাক। এঁরা হচ্ছেন আজকের serious নাট্যকার, এঁদের নাটকের সঙ্গে বাংলাদেশের দর্শকের পরিচয় করিয়ে দিলে একটা কাজ হয়।

তু.সা.: Modern Contemporary Drama-কে বাদ দিয়ে তো নাট্য আন্দোলন কোনোদিনই সার্থক হবে না।

উ.দ.: অসম্ভব।

তু.সা.: সেটাই আমি বলেছিলাম। না উনি বলছেন যে যদি করতেই হয় তো যেগুলো ভালো সেগুলো—

উ.দ.: বা Copitt(?) বলে যে—নাট্যকার—একটা সামাজিক নাট্যকার—শক্তিশালী লোক। তাঁর নাটকের সঙ্গে কেউ পরিচিত নয়।

তু.সা.: রবীন্দ্রনাথের নাটক কি আপনার মনে হয়—আমাদের দেশে—মানে গ্রামে—সার্থকভাবে দেখানো সম্ভব?

উ.দ.: সম্ভব তো নিশ্চয়। এখনও পর্যন্ত সম্ভব হয়নি, কিন্তু সম্ভব তো নিশ্চয়ই। সম্ভব হয়নি বলেই একদল লোক সুযোগ পেয়ে যাচ্ছে—মানে তাঁকে একটা মঠের ঠাকুর বানিয়ে ফেলার। রবীন্দ্রানন্দ নামে এক কাল্পনিক ঠাকুর তাঁরা সৃষ্টি করেছেন। তাঁর মঠ আছে, মোহান্ত আছে, শিষ্য, চেলা, সব একটা hierarchy তো এদের হাতে; রবীন্দ্রনাথের যে কী অবস্থা সেটা মাঝে-মাঝে New Empire-এ গিয়ে আমরা দেখতে পাই। না, এখন New Empire-এ না, এখন রবীন্দ্রসদনের মধ্যে তাঁরা মাঝে-মাঝে আসেন। সে এক ভীষণ জিনিষ। রবীন্দ্রনাথ

কি—আদৌ নাটকই তো নয় ওগুলো। ওগুলো হচ্ছে—ধরাছোঁয়ার বাইরে কতগুলো রক্তশূন্য, জীবনশূন্য, প্রাণশূন্য কতগুলো প্রতীক ঘুরে বেড়াচ্ছে। তারা আলতোভাবে পরস্পরকে কীরকম স্পর্শ করে—কীরকমভাবে কথা বলে—কী ছন্দে কথা বলে—সেটা আমাদের দেশের ছন্দই নয়। বাংলাদেশের গ্রামের মানুষের কাছে ওই ছন্দে কথা বললে তারা হাততালি দিতে শুরু করবে থামাবার জন্য। থামাবার জন্য হাততালি দেবে—হঠাৎ চিৎকার করে উঠবে—‘পালচাপা দে।’ কেননা ওরা যে-ছন্দে অভ্যস্ত সেটা হচ্ছে গৈরিশ ছন্দ, সেটা হচ্ছে অনেক বলিষ্ঠ। সেটাতে বুক এবং পেটের প্রচুর ব্যবহার এবং কণ্ঠস্বরের নানারকম উত্থান এবং পতনের ব্যাপার আছে। যদি ছন্দে বলতেই হয় তবে রবীন্দ্রনাথকে ওইরকম ছন্দে আবৃত্তি করা সম্ভব, সেটা পরীক্ষা করে আগেকার অভিনেতারা দেখেছেন—শিশির ভাদুড়ী নিজে দেখেছেন, সফল হয়েছেন—এবং তাঁরা—তাদেরকে যদি অনুমতিটা দেওয়া হতো যে রবীন্দ্রনাথকে তোমরা মঞ্চে করো। কিন্তু সেই শুদ্ধ বিশুদ্ধ একখানা রবীন্দ্রনাথ তো চাই আমাদের। সুতরাং কোথাও পান থেকে চুন খসলেই হাঁ-হাঁ করে কারা যেন এসে পড়ে—এসে চেপে ধরে। এদেরকে কী করে বোঝানো যাবে যে William Shakespeare লুপ্ত হয়ে যেতেন যদি-না মাঝে একদল লোক তাঁকে যথেষ্টভাবে adapt করত। যথেষ্টভাবে adapt করে, এবং কী বলব—একেবারে Shakespeare-কে ধর্ষণ করে Garrick, Cibber এইসমস্ত বিচ্ছিরি লোকেরা যাদের নাটক সম্পর্কে কোনো ধারণা, জ্ঞানগম্যি ছিল না, শুধু দর্শককে বুঝতো। এবং তারা late 18th century-early 19th century-তে Shakespeare-এর দশা রক্ষা করে দিয়েছিলো একেবারে।

তু.সা.: Edgar-এর সঙ্গে Cordelia-র বিয়ে দিয়ে ইত্যাদি।

উ.দ.: হ্যাঁ, এ সমস্ত নানাবিধ কাণ্ড। কিন্তু সেই সঙ্গে একটা জিনিষ স্বীকার করতেই হবে যে এরা William Shakespeare-কে জনতার মধ্যে আবার ফিরিয়ে আনলো। তার ফলে, পরে যখন Poel বা Granville-Barker এসে William Shakespeare-এর সম্পূর্ণ text-টাকে restore করলেন তার বিশুদ্ধতাকে restore করলেন, তখন Shakespeare-এর অভিনয় আবার হতে শুরু করলো এত ভালোভাবে। এত ভালোভাবে—কিন্তু আমি বলবো—সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ Shakespeare অভিনয় ইংলণ্ডে হচ্ছে না তো। সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ Shakespeare অভিনয় হচ্ছে continent-এ—বিশেষ করে পূর্ব জার্মানীর Shakespeare হচ্ছে, আমি বলবো, সবচেয়ে ভালো। কেননা তারা খানিকটা adapt করার পক্ষপাতী—খুব আমূল কোনো পরিবর্তন তারা করে না, তবে খানিকটা adapt করে নেবার পক্ষপাতী

—তারা পোষাকে-আশাকে খানিক impression আনবার চেষ্টা করে যে William Shakespeare আজকের যুগের নাট্যকার এবং সেটাতে অভাবনীয় সাফল্যের দিকে তারা যাচ্ছে—এতদূর গেছে যে আজকে পূর্ব জার্মানীর দৃষ্টান্তস্বরূপ তাদের costume—Shakespeare-নাটকের যে-costume design পূর্ব বার্লিনের—সেটা আজকে আবার ইংলণ্ডে এসেছে। ওঁরা বুঝতে পেরেছেন যে ওই প্রাচীন সৈনিকদের পোষাক পরালে ততটা হয় না, *Henry IV* করবার সময়, যা *Henry V*। যদি লোকগুলোকে একরকম steel helmet পরানো যায় বা একাধারে আজকের এবং সে-যুগের ব'লে মনে হবে—এবং তাদের আগেকার সেই tights-ফাইটস্ উড়িয়ে দিয়ে, মোজা-টোজা উড়িয়ে দিয়ে তাঁরা যখন তাদের অত্যন্ত সরু একরকম trousers পরাচ্ছেন, জার্সি পরাচ্ছেন, এবং লোকগুলো এমন কতগুলো চামড়ার থলি-টলি নিয়ে ওরা যখন আসে তখন ইঠাৎ তাদের মনে হ'তে পারে যে ওরা দ্বিতীয় বিশ্বযুদ্ধের থেকে বেরিয়ে এলো।

তু.সা.: এটা তো মনে হয় আপনি Tyrone Guthrie-র *Troilus and Cressida*-র কথা বলছেন।

উ.দ.: হ্যাঁ। এবং এরা সম্পূর্ণভাবে প্রভাবিত হয়েছে Berliner Ensemble দ্বারা। Berliner Ensemble-এর *Coriolanus* production থেকে। এবং তাতে আমাদের মনে হচ্ছে যে, William Shakespeare আজকের যুগের নাট্যকার, এবং তিনি একটা কোনো museum piece না বা তিনি কোনো ঠাকুর না।

তু.সা.: যারা তথাকথিত বৈপ্লবিক নাট্যকার, যেমন Gorki বা Brecht ব'লে আমাদের দেশে যথেষ্ট এ হয়েছে—তাঁদের নাটক সম্পর্কে আপনার কী ধারণা—মানে—অভিনয়ের দিক থেকে। আপনারা তো কিছু করেছেন Gorki থেকে, এবং Brecht থেকেও—কী করেছেন—এবং তার response কিরকম?

উ.দ.: আচ্ছা। একেবারে সঠিক মার্ক্সবাদী-লেনিনবাদী চিন্তা প্রয়োগ করলে আমার মনে হয়, ম্যাক্সিম গোর্কি নাট্যকার হিসেবে শ্রমিকশ্রেণীর নাট্যকার নন। জীবনে কোনোদিন তাঁর নাটকে শ্রমিকশ্রেণীর কথা ফোটেনি। তাঁর নাটকে—ধরুন—‘নীচের মহলে’—*Lower Depths*-এ যারা এসেছে—ভিখিরি, চোর, ডাকাত, গুণ্ডা এরা—বেকার। এরা যারা মার্ক্সবাদী-লেনিনবাদী দৃষ্টিভঙ্গীতে লুম্পেন প্রলেতারিয়েত মাত্র—এবং একটি অত্যন্ত বিপজ্জনক শ্রেণী। বা *Enemies*-এ যখন তিনি শ্রমিকশ্রেণীকে আনেন তখনও আনেন—মানে কী বলব—এক্কেবারে romanticize করে—যেটা পাতিবুর্জোয়া romanticism। শ্রমিকশ্রেণীর মুখপাত্র

হিসেবে ম্যাক্সিম গোর্কি ব্যর্থ—নাট্যকার ম্যাক্সিম গোর্কি। ঔপন্যাসিক ম্যাক্সিম গোর্কি, 'মা' উপন্যাসের লেখক ম্যাক্সিম গোর্কি নিশ্চয়ই শ্রমিকশ্রেণীর কথা বলেছেন। গোর্কি সম্পর্কে আমরা সেই বিচারই প্রয়োগ করবো যা আমরা রবীন্দ্রনাথ বা William Shakespeare সম্পর্কেও ক'রে থাকি—যে তাঁকে বাদ দেওয়া চলবে না—তাঁর প্রচণ্ড প্রয়োজন আছে, কিন্তু তিনি আমাদের প্রধান কার্যসূচী হতে পারেন না। সেখানে Bertolt Brecht সত্যিকারের শ্রমিকশ্রেণীর দৃষ্টিভঙ্গী প্রয়োগ করছেন। শ্রমিকশ্রেণীর দৃষ্টিভঙ্গী প্রয়োগ মানে এখানকার কোনো-কোনো নাট্যকারের ধারণা যে শ্রমিকশ্রেণীর দৃষ্টিভঙ্গী প্রয়োগ মানে হচ্ছে শ্রমিককে স্টেজে দেখাতে হবে। আর শ্রমিকদের একটা স্টাইক না-দেখাতে পারলে, বা শেষকালে স্টেজে লালঝাণ্ডা তুলতে না-পারলে শ্রমিকশ্রেণী তো হ'লো না। এবং আশ্চর্যের ব্যাপার যে এঁরা যখন শ্রমিককে আনেন, তখন এটা স্পষ্টই বোঝা যায় যে এঁরা পাতিবুর্জোয়া দৃষ্টিভঙ্গী থেকে শ্রমিককে দেখছেন। আর Brecht যখন পাতিবুর্জোয়া শ্রেণীকেও রঙ্গমঞ্চে আনেন, তখন স্পষ্টই বোঝা যায় যে তিনি শ্রমিকশ্রেণীর দৃষ্টিভঙ্গী থেকে তাদের দেখছেন। এখানেই ব্রেখ্টের পার্থক্য—এবং ব্রেখ্টের—মানে কী বলবো—শক্তি। এটাই বোধকরি ব্রেখ্ট যে এ-যুগের—এ-শতাব্দীর সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ নাট্যকার, শ্রমিকশ্রেণীর দৃষ্টিভঙ্গী থেকে—তার প্রমাণ। কিন্তু, আমরা ব্রেখ্টের নাটক করিনি এবং বোধহয় করবোও না। এই বিচিত্র কথাটির খানিকটা ব্যাখ্যা প্রয়োজন। ব্রেখ্ট—বিশেষ ক'রে যাঁরা শ্রমিকশ্রেণীর মুখপাত্র হয়ে নাট্যকার হন, তাঁরা একান্তভাবেই তাঁদের নিজস্ব জনতার সঙ্গে মিশে থাকেন। ব্রেখ্টের যে-নাট্যশৈলী, নাটকের ফর্ম, আমার মনে হয় সেটা একান্তভাবেই ইয়োয়োগীয় দর্শকের জন্য। ওঁর যে alienation এবং epic form—আমার ধারণা, সেটা আমার দেশের দর্শকের রুচি ও চাহিদার একান্তভাবেই বিপরীত। ব্রেখ্টের আসল উদ্দেশ্যটা অত্যন্ত স্পষ্ট। তিনি propaganda-র, প্রচারের একটা শক্তিশালী মাধ্যম সৃষ্টি করছেন। তাঁর ফর্ম। সুতরাং তাঁর কাছ থেকে যদি শিক্ষালাভ করতে হয় তো তাঁর বিষয়বস্তু থেকে শিক্ষালাভ করতে হবে। আমার দেশের দর্শক—আমি কী ক'রে তাদের মধ্যে প্রচার করতে পারবো, সেই জন্য আমার দেশের দর্শকের মুখের দিকে তাকিয়ে আমাকে আমার দেশের দর্শকের জন্য একটা ধারালো অস্ত্র, বাহন সৃষ্টি করতে হবে। এবং সেখানে ব্রেখ্টের নাটক এখানে অভিনয় করলে হয় 'তিন পয়সার পালা' হয়ে যাবে, যেটা ব্রেখ্ট নয়—যেটা যা-কিছু হতে পারে Bertolt Brecht নয়। নতুবা সেটা Brecht হতে পারে, একেবারে বিপুল Brecht. কিন্তু এখানকার লোক কিছুর বুঝলো না—তাতে কী লাভ?

তু.সা. : কিন্তু এমনভাবে free adaptation কি করা যায় না যাতে পরিপ্রেক্ষিতটা change হয়ে—

উ.দ. : আমার মনে হয়, এতে আমরা Brecht-এর যে-নির্দেশ আছে, সেটা অমান্য করবো। Brecht-এর নির্দেশ হচ্ছে অত্যন্ত স্পষ্ট—তুমি তোমার দেশের জনতাকে বিপ্লব সম্পর্কে শিক্ষা দাও। এ-সমাজকে যে বদলানো যায় এ-সম্পর্কে তাকে সচেতন হতে শেখাও—তাকে চিন্তা করতে শেখাও—এবং এই-যে সমাজের জটিল Social Laws এটাকে explain করো তার কাছে। কিন্তু আমার দর্শকের কাছে গেলেই আমি জানি যে নাটকের যেটা আঙ্গিক সেটা গড়ে ওঠে বহুদিনকার ঐতিহ্য থেকে—একেবারে মূল থেকে—ছিন্নমূল হয়ে কিছু করা যায় না। আমি জানি, আমার দেশের দর্শক অত্যন্ত আবেগপ্রবণ, আবেগমণ্ডিত নাটক দেখতে অভ্যস্ত। সে কাঁদতে চায়, সে হাসতে চায়, সে awe অনুভব করতে চায়। সে awe-র দ্বারা cleansed হতে চায়। সুতরাং Brecht-এর form-কে apply করার কোনো প্রয়োজনীয়তা নেই এখানে। শুধু প্রয়োজন নেই নয়, সেটা ব্যর্থ হবে। সেইজন্য আমরা Brecht-এর নাটক করি না।

তু.সা. : তাহলে বিদ্রোহী মার্ক্সবাদী নাটক অনুবাদ বা অন্য দেশে সেই দেশের পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে দেখানো যায় না ব'লে আপনার মনে হয়।

উ.দ. : আমার মনে হয়, Brecht-এর ঐতিহাসিক নাটক—ধরুন *Days of the Commune*—তার ঐতিহাসিক মূল্যের জন্য এখানে দেখানো যেতে পারে। সেটাও হয়তো খুব বেশি দর্শকের বোধগম্য হবে না। তথাপি—তার অন্যান্য নাটকের চেয়ে এটা হয়তো দর্শকের ঢের বেশি কাছে আনা যায়। Paris Commune-এর ইতিহাস ব'লে। এবং আমার দেশের শ্রমিক নিশ্চয়ই Paris Commune-এর বিদ্রোহটাকে দেখবে শ্রদ্ধা সহকারে, এবং কিছু বলা যায় না, নাটক শেষ হয়ে গেলে সে 'লাল সেলাম'ও করতে পারে উঠে দাঁড়িয়ে।—আন্তর্জাতিকও গেয়ে ফেলতে পারে। কিন্তু আমি লিখে দিতে পারি যে সে বিন্দুমাত্র তাতে, সত্যিই যাকে বলে প্রেরণা অনুভব করা—উদ্বুদ্ধ হওয়া—যেটা ব্রেখ্ট চাইছেন—যে মেরে যাও বন্দুক—চালিয়ে যাও—এবং থামবে শুধু বন্দুক বেশি গরম হয়ে গেলে—সেই প্রেরণার স্তরে তুলতে পারবে না সে-নাটক।

তু.সা. : সে অর্থে Peter Weiss-ও বোধহয় সম্ভব নয়।

উ.দ. : সম্ভব নয়।

তু.সা. : আচ্ছা আরেকটা কথা। এখন পর্যন্ত যা-যা রবীন্দ্রনাথের নাটক প্রযোজিত হয়েছে, তার মধ্যে কোনোটা সার্থকতার স্তরে পৌঁছেছে ব'লে আপনার বিশ্বাস?

উ.দ. : নিশ্চয়।

তু.সা. : আপনি দেখেছেন?

উ.দ. : হ্যাঁ, বহরুপীর ‘রক্তকরবী’। বহরুপীর ‘রক্তকরবী’। যেহেতু ওটা প্রথম পরীক্ষা রবীন্দ্রনাথের নাটক নিয়ে, তার আগে পর্যন্ত—অবশ্য আমি কি আর সব দেখেছি রবীন্দ্রনাথের অভিনয়—রবীন্দ্রনাথের নাটক যত অভিনীত হয়েছে তার আগে! তবে শতকরা ৯০ ভাগকে তো বাদ দিয়ে রাখা যায়। আমরা জানি, কী হবে। আর যে শতকরা দশটি ভালো অভিনয় হয়েছে তার ভেতরে কিছু আমি দেখেছি। তো আমি তার মধ্যে বলতে পারি—‘রক্তকরবী’—বহরুপীর প্রযোজনায় ‘রক্তকরবী’ হচ্ছে প্রথম প্রচেষ্টা যেখানে রবীন্দ্রনাথ যে বাস্তব মানুষ নিয়ে, বাস্তব সমস্যা, বাস্তব রাজনৈতিক অর্থনৈতিক সমস্যা নিয়ে নাটক লিখেছিলেন—এইটা দেখাবার প্রথম প্রয়াস। তার মানে এ নয় যে বহরুপী যে-অবস্থায় নাটক করেছেন ঠিক সে-অবস্থায় নাটকটা বাইরে নিয়ে গেলে বাংলাদেশের সমস্ত মানুষ সব বুঝে ফেলবে তা নয়—আরো অনেক এগুতে হবে। এ-কাজটা করতে হবে কমিউনিস্টদের। আর কেউ নেই এ-কাজ করার। কমিউনিস্টদেরই যেটা কাজ ছিলো, যে শ্রমিকশ্রেণীর অগ্রণী সেনা হিসেবে প্রতিক্রিয়াশীলদের সিঁদুক ভেঙে, ওরা যত সমস্ত সম্পদ লুকিয়ে রেখেছে সে-সম্পদ কেড়ে আনা, সে-সম্পদের মধ্যে ওরা যখন সোনা লুকিয়ে রাখে সেটাও যখন আমরা কেড়ে আনবো—ওরা রবীন্দ্রনাথকে লুকিয়ে রাখলে সেটাও আমরা কেড়ে আনবো। কিন্তু সেদিকে ভীষণভাবে ব্যাহত হয়ে গেছে কাজ—কেননা কালাপাহাড়ীদের জন্য। রবীন্দ্রনাথ বুর্জোয়া কবি, রবীন্দ্রনাথ প্রতিক্রিয়াশীল—রবীন্দ্রনাথকে ইতিহাসের ডাস্টবিনে নিক্ষেপ করবে বাংলাদেশের জনতা—এ সমস্ত কথা যারা বলে তারা উন্মাদ ছাড়া কী? আর ওই ‘রক্তকরবী’—বহরুপীর প্রযোজনায়। তারপর থেকে কাজ ব্যাহত হ’য়ে গেছে, রবীন্দ্রনাথ আর ভালোভাবে হয়নি।

তু.সা. : ‘রাজা’ বা ‘বিসর্জন’ ওগুলো—

উ.দ. : দুঃখের বিষয়—আমার ওগুলো ভালো লাগেনি।

তু.সা. : আচ্ছা আপনার নিজের কখনো রবীন্দ্রনাথ করার ইচ্ছে আছে?

উ.দ. : আমরা আগে রবীন্দ্রনাথ করিছি, ক’রে প্রতিজ্ঞা করিছি আর কখনো করবুনি, এই কাজটা আর কখনো করবুনি।

তু.সা. : আপনার ‘অচলায়তন’ কিন্তু আমার ভালো লেগেছিলো, আপনি যাই বলুন।

উ.দ. : আপনি অত্যন্ত মহানুভব।